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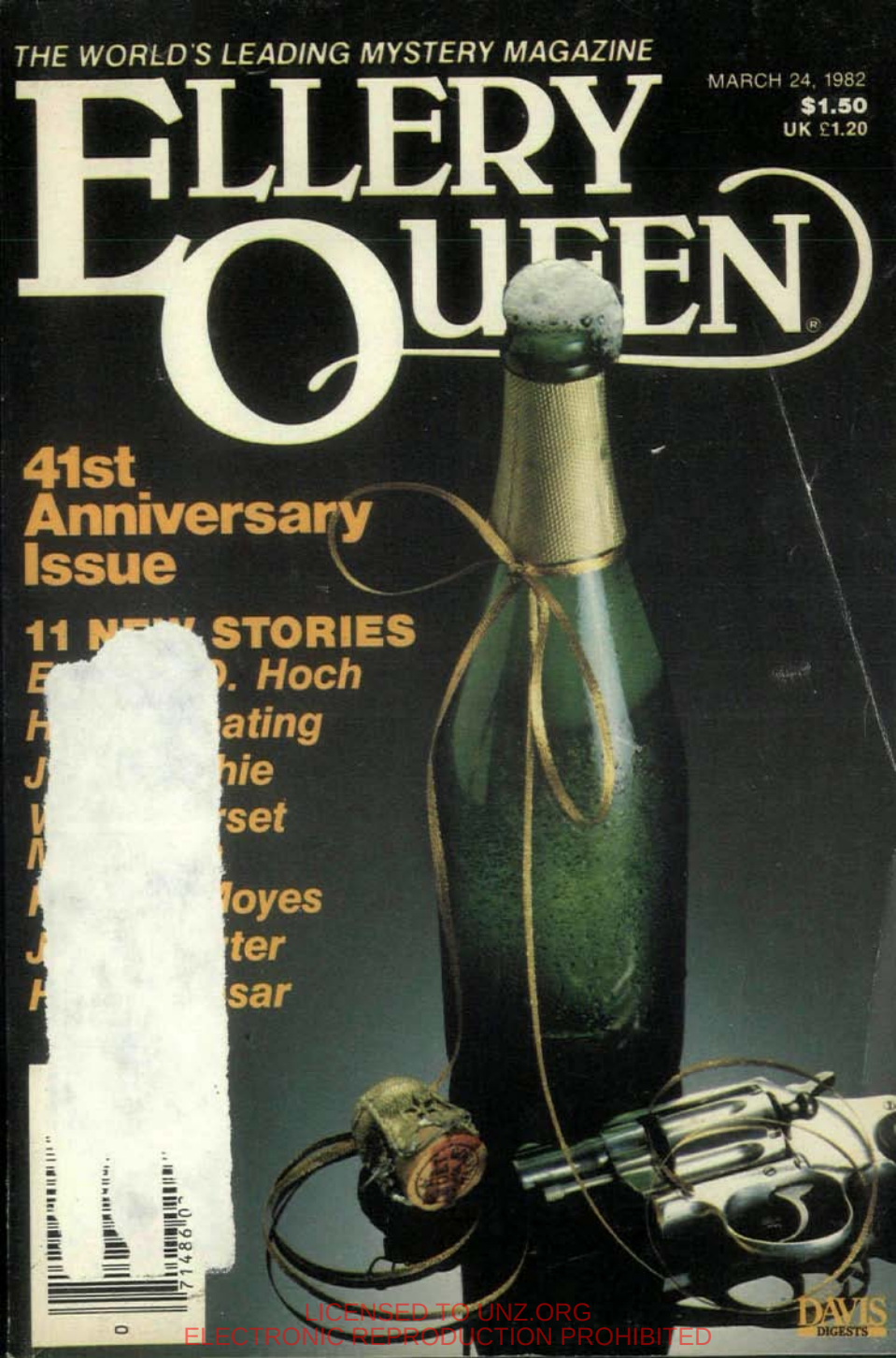

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ELLERY QUEEN

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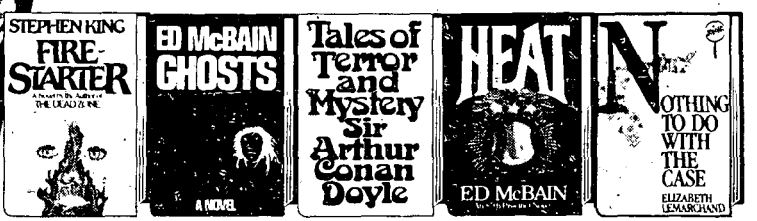

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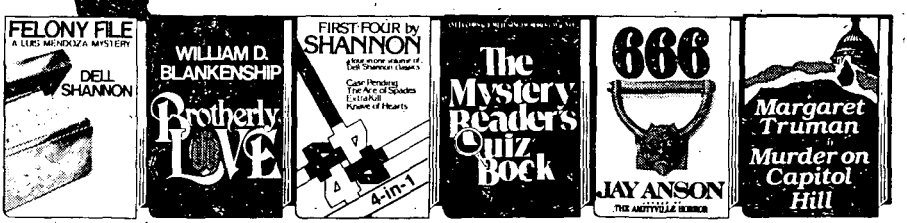

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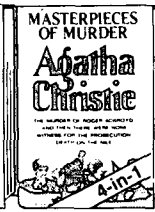

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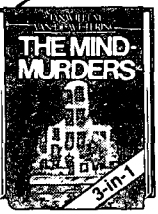

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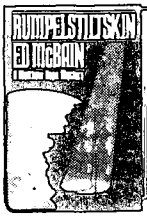

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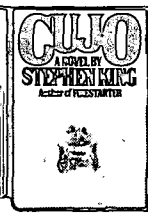

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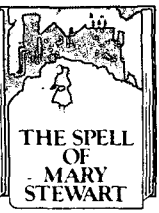

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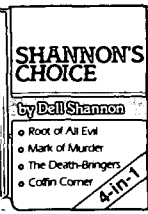

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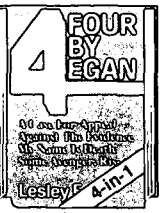

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a *NEW* short story by

JACK RITCHIE

"I thought about that for some minutes and then came squarely to the point. How was I going to get away with murder?"

THE ORANGE MURDERS

by JACK RITCHIE

I do not remember what the argument had been about—there were so many—but we had been at breakfast. I snatched the knife from the table and stabbed my wife.

In falling, her hand convulsively closed over one of the oranges on the table. She now lay dead on the floor, the orange still gripped in her hand.

I stared at the knife I still held. Both my hand and the weapon were bloody and my next impulse was to clean them immediately. I went to the sink, washed and dried the knife with a dishtowel, and then put it away in a counter drawer.

I was now completely calm—though perhaps calmness at a time like that is simply a high form of hysteria.

What should I do now? Phone the police?

I thought about that without enthusiasm. No, not just yet. Despite the fact that I was possessed by this calmness—almost serenity—I felt that I could not face the police just yet.

I found myself putting on my topcoat and my hat, as I always did on weekdays at this time of the morning. I went out to the garage and got into my car.

Yes, that was it. I would go for a refreshing drive while I mulled things over and *then* I would go to the police.

I drove east and I realized with a bit of surprise that I was actually driving to work.

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I shrugged. Well, why not? What was the hurry in going to the police anyway?

I parked my car in its usual spot in the company parking lot and went up to my desk on the third floor of the McNeil Construction Company.

I am an accountant and while my job requires diligence, it by no means occupies all of my mind. I frequently find myself hard at work, while half of my brain dwells on other matters, as it did now.

It was really unfair, I thought. Basically, Eunice *deserved* to die. Not that I would cold-bloodedly have done the deed. It had occurred in one rash spur of the moment. There had been no premeditation or planning.

Then *why* should I now have to spend the rest of my life in prison for an uncontrollable spontaneous act? Was that a fair exchange for Eunice's death?

Certainly not.

I grew a bit indignant about the situation.

And yet the police would certainly arrest me. After all, my fingerprints were on the murder weapon, on the—

I blinked. But they *weren't*. I had forgotten that I had washed and wiped them off the knife.

I thought about that for some minutes and then came squarely to the point. How was I going to get away with murder?

Well, I would simply deny that I had killed Eunice and stick to that. When I had left for work, she had been alive and healthy.

Of course the police wouldn't believe me. I was the logical, and likely the only, suspect. However, wasn't the burden of proof for murder up to the state? Of course it was. A man was innocent until proved guilty, wasn't he? We were living in a democracy, weren't we?

The police would question me thoroughly. At length. But if I steadfastly denied everything, what *could* they really do? Without solid evidence. Or witnesses.

I dreaded having to go home at the end of the day and "discovering" the body of my wife; however, that was spared me.

Two police detectives—guided by our department supervisor—made their way to my desk at eleven o'clock. Eunice's body had been found by a neighbor who had dropped in to borrow laundry detergent.

I was taken to police headquarters. A Sergeant Jonas, a bulky grizzled veteran, appeared to be in charge of the case. He led the protracted questioning until finally my request to phone an attorney

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prevailed. I selected one at random from the yellow pages of the telephone book.

Young, eager, and a bit breathless, he soon made his appearance.

The questioning resumed, this time with my attorney present, and I stoutly continued to deny any part in Eunice's death.

Sergeant Jonas eventually asked if I would take a polygraph test.

"Certainly," I said. "I have absolutely nothing to hide."

My lawyer, as I expected, quickly interposed. *We* would not take the polygraph test. The results of polygraph testing are inconclusive. Besides, in our state, they cannot be admitted as evidence in court.

Sergeant Jonas dropped the subject, but the questioning resumed. At six o'clock my attorney reminded Jonas that while he had the right to question me, that questioning could not be continued until it became a physical ordeal. Since I had been in police hands since late morning, it was now up to them either to book me or to release me.

Jonas thought it over, and probably because he was getting nowhere with me, decided to let me go with the admonition that I was not to leave the city.

I took a taxi back to the company parking lot, retrieved my car, and drove home. I picked up the afternoon newspaper on the welcome mat as I entered the house.

I found a bare account of Eunice's death in the local section. The article mentioned that she had been found clutching an orange. It also contained the information that the police were questioning her husband.

I went into the kitchen to make myself a drink. Eunice's body had been removed, of course, but the dried blood and her chalked outline remained on the floor. I took my drink into the living room and sat down.

Would I be able to outlast the questioning? Day after day? Or, after a while, would I falter, begin to contradict myself, dig my own grave? Yes, there was the strong possibility that I might. If Jonas kept at me.

What could I possibly do to relieve the pressure?

Suppose the police were given a valid reason to suspect that someone else might have committed the murder? Some madman, perhaps?

I pondered. Well, why not give it a try? What did I have to lose?

I have a portable typewriter at home, but I decided not to use it

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for my purpose. After all, the keys of each machine have distinctive characteristics, much like fingerprints.

I drove to a drugstore, picked up some stationery and stamps, then continued on to a branch of the public library where I knew that one could rent the services of a typewriter. I put a coin in the slot, sat down, and rolled a sheet of paper into the machine. I removed my gloves.

Dear Sirs:

My wife has run away with another man. I do not know where they are now. I may never be able to find them.

But she, and her kind, must pay. Must suffer. They are all alike. Jezebels. If I kill one of them, I kill my wife.

This morning I chose one of the creatures to pay the price for my wife's deceit and treachery. I stabbed her to death.

Fairly good, I thought, but it needed a touch more. Something that would tie it specifically to the murder of Eunice. Something distinctive. Ah, yes, I had it.

My wife's favorite color was orange. When I killed this woman whose name I do not know, I left an orange in her dead hand. It is my sign, my signature, to show that justice has been done.

I would send the unsigned letter to the police. But would they take it seriously? Was it possible that they might ignore the letter entirely, thinking that it was just the work of some crackpot who had read the account of the murder in the newspapers and decided to steal credit for the killing? Would they drop it into the nearest wastebasket? No, I simply couldn't have that.

I looked up addresses in the phone book and then made six more copies of the letter. In addition to the one sent to the police, I sent one each to the mayor of our city, the two daily newspapers, a Protestant clergyman noted for his Sunday TV sermons, a highly respected rabbi, and the bishop of the diocese. That ought to do it, I thought. Now the letter could not be suppressed or ignored.

The next morning at eleven thirty Jonas and his partner appeared at my door. He pulled an envelope from his coat pocket and handed it to me. It was one of the letters I had mailed the night before.

I read the single page, letting my eyes widen in the process. "This man killed Eunice? He is obviously insane. Have you arrested him?"

"Not yet." Jonas studied me. "Maybe he did commit the murder and maybe he didn't. Maybe he just wants a little attention. We get nuts like that all the time. There's another possibility."

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"What is that?"

Jonas smiled thinly. "Do you have a typewriter?"

I pretended naivete. "Yes, of course. A portable." Then I gave way to astonishment. "You don't think that I—"

"Could I see the typewriter?"

I brought him the portable.

He inserted a sheet of paper from his notebook into the machine. He typed only a half a dozen words before he realized that the portable's type was elite. The letter had been in pica.

"Do you have any other typewriter in the house?"

"No."

"Do you mind if we take a look?"

"Go right ahead."

Their search seemed competent enough, since they were looking for something as large as a typewriter, and I am certain that if there had been another one, they would have found it. After a half hour they gave up.

I could not resist rubbing it in. "I have a typewriter at my desk at the company. Would you like to compare that?"

"We will."

I did not, of course, go to work that day, and I would not until after Eunice's funeral.

The afternoon newspaper was delivered at four thirty. The story appeared on page one. *Officials, Clergymen Receive Murder Confession.* The text of the letter appeared in full. I wondered if that would have been done if only the police had received my letter. The article went on to say that the police were attempting to determine the identity of the letter writer. It also mentioned that they were continuing to question the dead woman's husband.

I sighed. Well, I had done all I could. I would leave it there and hope for the best.

The next morning I made my breakfast, took the tray into the living room, and turned on the TV set.

When the international and national news had been dispensed with, the newscaster turned to the local. It seemed that last night at nine P.M. one James Pennyfeather had been downstairs in his basement woodworking shop when he had heard a scream upstairs. He had rushed into the kitchen to find his wife dead on the floor. She had been stabbed once and on the palm of her right hand lay an orange. The kitchen door had been open to the night and Pennyfeather claimed that he had caught a glimpse of a fleeing figure.

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He had phoned the police immediately. The murder weapon had not been found.

I spilled some of my coffee.

It was perfectly obvious what had happened. Pennyfeather had probably had an argument with his wife and stabbed her to death. And then, faced with punishment for murder, he had sought to cover up his part in the crime. The newspaper account of Eunice's murder and her orange, and also the printing of the murder confession were fresh in his mind. He had quickly washed and put away the murder weapon—as I had done—and got an orange out of the refrigerator. He had put the blame for the murder on my creation. *My* Orange Murderer.

I felt a touch of indignation. The man had stolen my *modus operandi.*

A picture of the murdered woman flashed on the screen of my mind, side by side with one of my wife. Frankly both women look quite alike. Frowning. Narrow-eyed. Mrs. Pennyfeather probably had been as large as Eunice. Short-tempered. Domineering.

My irritation faded when I saw the grieving husband. He seemed to be a rather small man. Probably hard-working and unappreciated. Undoubtedly he had been nagged to the limit and had exploded.

Actually Pennyfeather had done me a favor. Jonas hadn't really bought my creation of the Orange Murderer. Surely this would convince him.

Yes, Pennyfeather had done me a favor and I could help him in turn. And myself, of course. Wouldn't the Orange Murderer write another letter? It would be characteristic in a case like this, wouldn't it? A man with a mind like that would want to make certain that he received credit for the murder. Yes, another letter was called for.

I drove to the branch library and once again inserted paper into the typewriter.

Dear Sirs:

After killing that first woman, I thought that I would find rest, satisfaction, peace. But I was wrong.

I have not yet been fully avenged. Therefore last night I went out and killed again. I understand, from television, that her surname is Pennyfeather.

I mailed only three copies this time—to the police department, and one each to our daily newspapers. I thought that should be sufficient now that the world was aware of the Orange Murderer.

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When I returned home, I found Jonas and his partner waiting on the porch.

I smiled. "I heard about it on TV this morning. The murder of another woman. Now are you convinced that there is some madman going about killing women he doesn't even know?"

"Maybe." Jonas studied me. "Where were you at approximately nine o'clock last night?"

The import of his question struck me immediately. I was aghast. "Do you think that *I* might have had something to do with the death of this Pennyfeather woman? But that is ridiculous."

He smiled, but without humor. "Let's suppose that you wrote that letter to all those important people as a cover-up for the murder of your wife. Wouldn't it follow that you might actually go out and commit another murder or two just to make us believe that there was such a thing as the Orange Murderer?"

"That would be insanity."

"I know," Jonas said. "We'd like you to come down to headquarters with us. We have a few more questions to ask you."

I phoned my lawyer before we left and he met us at headquarters. I was interrogated for five hours before Jonas released me again.

Eunice was buried on Saturday. After the funeral I stopped off at a liquor store to buy a bottle of bourbon. Ordinarily I am not a drinking man, but I felt I needed the support.

At home one drink led to another. I remember turning on the lamps when it got dark outside. Then I fell asleep on the couch.

I woke with morning sunlight in my face. I turned off the lamps and went to the bathroom for aspirins. When I returned, I fetched the Sunday morning paper from the porch.

I stared at the headline. *Orange Murderer Claims Third Victim.*

Third?

I read. Last night, according to a Sean O'Reilly, he had fallen asleep while watching television in his living room. He had awakened at nine, and not finding his wife present, had gone looking for her. He had found her dead on the floor of their laundry room, bludgeoned to death. A piece of pipe, bloody, but wiped clean of fingerprints, lay beside her body. An orange was clutched in one of the dead woman's hands.

A neighbor thought she had heard screams earlier in the evening, at eight thirty, and been tempted to phone the police, but then she had decided not to, assuming that it was just a domestic quarrel and she might be wise to keep out of it. O'Reilly had heard no screams.

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He explained that he was an extremely heavy sleeper and besides, the TV set had been turned on fairly loud.

I closed my eyes. Well, it was perfectly obvious to me what had really happened. O'Reilly had quarreled with his wife in the laundry room and he had used the pipe to kill her.

I could also account for those thirty minutes O'Reilly claimed he had been sleeping. Instead, after the killing, he had rushed to the refrigerator for an orange and finding none, he had found it necessary to dash out and buy some. When he returned, he put one of them in his dead wife's hand, and *then* he had phoned the police.

I thought that over. The Orange Murderer had used a knife on his first two victims, but this time a piece of pipe? Well, why not? Variety is the spice of death. I would have to cover that point when I wrote to the police. However, since today was Sunday and none of the libraries was open, I would have to wait until Monday.

I expected Jonas at my door momentarily, but he did not stop by until late afternoon. He looked both tired and discouraged.

I let him in. "I suppose that you think I committed the latest Orange Murder too?"

He shook his head wearily. "I *know* you didn't do it."

"You *know*?"

"Yes. I've had you watched ever since the last time I took you to headquarters. Last night, when the third victim, Mrs. O'Reilly, was killed, you were lying right there on the sofa. Asleep or passed out. My man could see you because you forgot to pull the drapes. You didn't move from seven thirty last night until at least ten thirty, when I was told about the O'Reilly murder and called my man off."

I was, of course, happy to have an alibi. "So you finally believe in the existence of the Orange Murderer?"

He would not commit himself. "All I know is that you didn't commit murder number three. I don't know what else to think right now."

He stifled a yawn. "I've been putting in a lot of overtime. I thought I'd just drop in for a minute and bring you up to date."

On Monday morning I went back to work. Naturally I was the center of attention and all of my co-workers assured me that *they* had not for *one* moment ever entertained the idea that I might have murdered my wife. I believed none of them, except for Mrs. Beasley, at the next desk. She is a rather gentle soul who believes the best of everyone.

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Around three o'clock someone sneaked an afternoon newspaper into the office.

Orange Murderer Kills Number Four.

Yesterday a Mike Horvath, returning from an afternoon of Sunday bowling, had found his wife dead on the living-room floor. She had been strangled. In the palm of her hand lay a tangerine.

Tangerine?

Well, close enough. I suppose one had to make do with what one had on hand.

After work today I would write letters three and four, the latter explaining the tangerine.

The newspaper was passed around the office and I went back to my books. After a while I noticed Mrs. Beasley at her desk staring into space.

"Is there anything troubling you, Mrs. Beasley?"

She sighed. "Not really. It's just that my husband bought a half-dozen oranges."

"A half-dozen oranges?"

She nodded. "And he's allergic to oranges."

"Then he probably intended them for you."

"But I hate oranges. He *knows* that."

I made a thoughtful guess. "Well, sometimes one loses an allergy as one gets older. Perhaps he intends to re-test himself to see if he's still allergic."

Mrs. Beasley smiled. "But of course. That must be the answer."

I cleared my throat. "Why didn't you ask him?"

"He goes to work before I do and I just noticed them this morning in the refrigerator."

I experienced a rather cold feeling in the pit of my stomach. Perhaps Beasley *was* really re-testing his allergy, but on the other hand was it *possible* that . . .

How many husbands were out there right now checking their refrigerators to make certain they had oranges and waiting for the opportune moment? How many more letters would I have to write for the Orange Murderer in the future?

While it was perfectly true that *some* wives undoubtedly deserved to be murdered, weren't there others, like Mrs. Beasley, who didn't? Trusting wives who probably had a lot of life insurance with their husbands as sole beneficiaries?

What had I wrought?

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Could a man of good conscience—and *basically* I was a man of good conscience—allow the murders to continue?

No, he could not.

I could not undo what had already been done, but at least I could prevent a spate of Orange Murders in the days to come. The Orange Murderer must be exposed. Destroyed. He must no longer be available as a convenient cover for future murders, and there was only one way to do that.

I rose from my desk, left the office, and drove directly to police headquarters. I found Sergeant Jonas and confessed to the murder of my wife and the writing of the letters.

The trial was swift and I received a life sentence. However, with good behavior, I confidently expect to be paroled in twelve years and eight months.

So do Pennyfeather, O'Reilly, and Horvath.

I was relieved to discover that in each of their cases the oranges—and the tangerine—had been afterthoughts, not inspirations.

As a matter of fact, having something in common, we have become rather good friends here in Waupon.

When we leave here, the four of us intend to pool our resources and buy an orange grove in Florida.

DETECTIVERSE

NO GENTLEMAN

by LESLIE S. HAUGER

The detective looked at the knife
That derived the body of life.
He asked the man, "Who
Was that lady you slew?"
"That was no lady, that was my wife!"

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a *NEW* short story by

JAMES HOLDING

Lou Andrews was an A-Number-One diamond salesman. He sold to the most exclusive jewelers in New York, Paris, and London. But now that diamonds were so high-priced, Lou had switched to rubies. Burma rubies or Thai rubies—that was the question . . .

A DEAL IN RUBIES

by JAMES HOLDING

It was such a simple idea that I wondered why I hadn't thought of it earlier.

I looked down at the paper of rubies on my desk. "Thai goods?" I said to Lou Andrews who sat across from me.

"Sure, Mr. Kingston. What else?"

"You know Jonathan Gilbert's doesn't use Thai ruby."

"But this is 1979, Mr. Kingston. Conditions are different now."

I gave him a chance to make his pitch. "Tell me how."

His good-natured grin drew his long ascetic face into myriad grooves and wrinkles. He shrugged. "Okay. So first we look at diamonds, shall we, Mr. Kingston?"

"Let's."

"How long's it been since diamonds became the thing to invest in? Against recession, inflation, whatever? Ten years? Eleven?"

"Ten," I said. "But a quality jeweler like Jonathan Gilbert's is not comfortable selling diamonds for investment only, Lou. Remember that."

"I'm remembering. So now tell me, the price of high-grade diamonds has climbed how high?"

"Too high for most people to afford them?"

"Right. A dealer like me sells you the three top grades of one-

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carat investment diamonds—or jewelry diamonds—for how much? I'll tell you, even if you know. Between $15,000 and $40,000." He slanted me a salesman's calculating look. "So what is the next best gemstone for investment or for jewelry-making purposes? What might just possibly take the place of diamonds until De Beers stops supporting high diamond prices by keeping prime stones off the market?"

"Rubies," I said agreeably.

"Right again. Rubies. Thai rubies."

I shook my head.

"Not Thai," I said. "Burma."

"Burma? Burma ruby is kaput. You know that. Production is somewhere between minus zilch and non-existent, ever since Burma got sealed off in the sixties."

As a buyer for Jonathan Gilbert's, exclusive jewelers, New York, Paris, London, and Rio, I *did* know that. But I said, "Everyone knows Burma ruby is the best. Color, brilliance, everything."

"That's a myth," Lou Andrews said. "Excuse my saying so. Like Kashmir sapphires are better than Ceylon's top-grade sapphire. And Colombia emeralds are better than comparable emeralds from Zaire. Myths, all of them."

"Of course," I said. I was amused. "But commercially, that's the truth. Colombia emeralds, Kashmir sapphires, Burma rubies are tops. The gems from Ceylon, Zaire, and Thailand are second-class citizens in our business. Ask the top auctioneers—Sotheby's, Christie's, Parke-Bernet. They'll tell you a top-grade ruby from Burma brings two to two and a half times what a comparable quality Thai ruby does."

"Maybe so, but—"

"No maybe about it, Lou. Fact."

"Wait. Will you please listen, Mr. Kingston? Just take a look at what we got here in a ruby—whether it's from Burma or Thailand."

"I'm looking."

"Okay. We got a precious stone that's ten to twenty times cheaper than its counterpart in diamonds. A precious gem your ordinary investor can afford, see? And besides that, we got a precious stone that's forty times *rarer* than diamonds!"

"Forty times?" I could have given him an argument about that. More like forty-five times.

"At least forty!"

I said, "We still want Burma rubies, Lou. Not Thai."

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Lou didn't give up easily. "Face it, Mr. Kingston. Thailand is the only source of ruby corundum left. The *only* source. And not a very reliable source at that, with political coups going on all over the place. So ruby mining in Thailand could conk out entirely, anytime. Just like in Burma and Cambodia. Ruby, any kind, is an endangered species. And therefore it's a terrific gemstone investment right now. I'm willing to guarantee you that in five years or less the price of the top grades of Thai ruby will jump maybe four-five hundred percent. So what do you say? Won't you recommend Thai ruby to your people?"

Gently I repeated, "We want Burma ruby, Lou. Only Burma ruby."

I had been buying top-grade diamonds from Lou for twenty years. He shook his head sadly and told me bluntly, "You got no vision, Mr. Kingston. You aren't facing facts. I'm telling you the truth on this. Trust me."

"I trust you. And I'm hoping you can find me a few carats of Burma ruby on your next buying trip."

Lou said, "I don't think I'll even *go* to Bangkok this year. The Chinese families who control the Thai ruby mining there are beginning to milk the ruby scarcity for all it's worth. They're charging such high prices for Thai rubies now that without a firm buyer for anything I pick up, I'd lose money on the trip. I'm staying home."

"I sympathize with you," I said. "But you can see our point, can't you? The color of Burma ruby is so superior—soft, unassuming pinky-red as contrasted to the brilliant cherry-red or almost black of these Thai stones." I began to fold up his paper of rubies. Then, as though suddenly seeing it for the first time, I poked a single ruby with the eraser-end of my pencil. "Look at this one, though," I said, in a surprised tone. "Not bad color for a Thai ruby, is it? Brilliance and clarity, too. It could almost be a Burma stone."

Lou leaned over my desk and looked at the ruby I indicated. "Yeah," he said. "You're beginning to see what I'm driving at about the quality of Thai goods. That Thai ruby would scale at the gem laboratory about three point five in color, maybe forty percent brilliancy, and high in proportion and finish. You're right. It *could* almost be a Burma stone."

I sat back in my chair. "Do you suppose," I said casually, "you could find me a few hundred carats of Thai ruby like this one?"

Lou stared at me. "Maybe. If I went to Bangkok and toured the dealers for a week or so. But I told you. I'm staying home."

"Change your mind," I said softly. "Go."

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He gave me a puzzled look. "And buy you some stones like that one?"

"Yes. As near as possible to Burma rubies in color, brilliance, intensity, clarity, finish, the works."

"For Jonathan Gilbert's?"

"Who else?"

"You just told me you won't buy anything but Burma goods."

I grinned at him. "I'll buy them from you *as* Burma goods," I said.

Comprehension dawned in Lou's eyes.

It was my turn to lecture. "Listen, Lou," I said, "let's stop kidding each other. I know as well as you do what the Mystique of Place means in the gem business. The source is all. Provenance is what counts, just like in art. So you wouldn't even need to confirm that the rubies were from Burma. If you tell me you just *think* they are—a dealer with your reputation and record—and *I* tell Jonathan Gilbert's they are, I can buy them from you at two and one-half times what my company would let me pay for Thai stones."

Lou blew out his breath gustily, pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, and wiped a suddenly beaded upper lip. "Mr. Kingston," he said, "do you mean what I think you mean?"

"Sure," I said. "You buy the stones in Bangkok at Thai ruby prices, sell them to me for Jonathan Gilbert's at Burma ruby prices, and we split the difference between us." I paused to let him digest it. "It's not being quite honest with my company, of course. But they won't lose by it. Investors in rubies or diamonds know very little or nothing about gem quality. They have to take the word of experts like you and me and Jonathan Gilbert's on what they're buying. Jonathan Gilbert's will sell the Thai stones to our customers as Burma stones in good faith at the appropriate higher prices. So Jonathan Gilbert's loses nothing. You and I, however, make a tidy little fortune."

Lou gave his forehead a dab with the handkerchief. "Mr. Kingston," he said, with the air of a man who has recently had an illusion shattered, "I'm surprised at you!"

"You just sold me on the value of Thai rubies," I said. "You just guaranteed they'll shoot up in price very soon." I reached out and began to fold up the paper or rubies again. "So what do you say, Lou? If you feel it's dishonest, we'll both forget I ever mentioned it. Okay?" I handed him the packet of rubies.

Lou got up from his chair and thrust the rubies carelessly into a

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pocket of his jacket. "I'll stop at Thomas Cook on the way back to 47th Street," he said, "and see about an air reservation for Bangkok."

A week later I received a cablegram from him. *Unexpected opportunity acquire 132 carats investment grade Burma rubies. Are you interested?*

I chuckled, admiring his acuity. His cable established for the record that the rubies were Burma. And it got me off the hook with Jonathan Gilbert's if anything went wrong later.

I showed the cable to Jonathan Gilbert the Third, who was now head of the firm his grandfather had founded. He read the cable and asked me, "This Louis Andrews, is he a reliable dealer?"

"The best," I said. "We've bought top-grade diamonds from him for twenty years."

"Fine. Then cable him that if we like the goods we'll buy the lot."

On the following Monday my telephone rang and I picked it up and said, "Hello," and it was Lou Andrews.

"Hi, Mr. Kingston. I'm home."

"Welcome back. Home in your office or home at home?"

"In the office."

"You got the goods?"

He sounded pleased. "I sure have, Mr. Kingston. Can I send them over to you by armed messenger? I'm so pooped from jetlag I could sleep for a week. I'm going home to Nutley this minute. Soon as I—"

"The messenger will be fine," I said, feeling a pulse of excitement despite myself. "I'm looking forward to seeing what you have for us."

"You'll like it," he said. "I'm telling you, Mr. Kingston, you'll like it. I'm so sure that I'm sending my invoice along with the stones."

"If the goods checks out," I said, "you'll have payment on Wednesday, Lou." I lowered my voice. "I'll get in touch with you about Friday. Okay?"

"Okay, Mr. Kingston." And he hung up.

I went to see him shortly after two on Friday afternoon. His office was on the third floor of a diamond-district building. I'd been there before. I was in a celebratory mood, so I opened his office door without knocking and went in, smiling. He looked up at me from a bare desk and smiled back, the wrinkled smile. "Hi, Mr. Kingston, nice to see you. Have a seat. I've been expecting you."

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I sat down on a chair beside his desk. It was upholstered in leather and had wooden arms. "You all over your jetlag?" I asked.

"Yep. I'm a hundred percent now."

"And you had a good trip to Bangkok?"

"Super. Couldn't you tell when you saw the goods I brought back?"

"Lou," I said with honest respect, "you did a superlative job. There was never any question about the rubies at Jonathan Gilbert's."

"That's fine," said Lou. "So what can I do for you today, Mr. Kingston?"

I laughed. "Don't kid around. You know what I'm here for."

"Your half of the loot?"

"Exactly."

"Too bad," said Lou. "There isn't any loot, Mr. Kingston."

I think my jaw dropped an inch. "What?" I said, shocked.

"No loot. I'm sorry."

"You're refusing to honor our agreement?" I couldn't believe my ears.

"Our agreement was for Thai rubies," Andrews said. He raised his head, rounded his eyes, and stuck his tongue in his cheek like a mischievous little boy trying to explain to his mother why the cookie jar is broken.

I said, "Wait a minute! Don't fool around with me, Lou. You're not claiming those rubies you brought back are Burma goods, are you?"

"Let me tell you what happened, Mr. Kingston. Okay? I'm in the salesroom of Cheong Fat Soon in Bangkok, right beside the Rama Hotel, looking for the kind of Thai goods we talked about—Thai goods that could pass as Burma. And what happens while I'm there?" He paused dramatically. "What happens is, this Cambodian refugee walks in off the street. He weighs maybe ninety pounds. He's wearing one of those dumb straw hats and old baggy black rags. And he's smelling like he hasn't had a bath in maybe three years, which he probably hasn't."

I cut in. "Come on, Lou, don't lie to me."

"Who's lying? This guy pulls out a greasy leather bag from under his rags and there's a hundred and thirty-two carats of real Burma rubies in that bag, Mr. Kingston! This guy's been toting the bag around, he tells Fat Soon, ever since he escaped from Burma back in 1971 with a little inventory of one of the Burmese ruby mines. The mine, he says, belongs to his uncle."

I waved Lou to silence. His story was obviously a ridiculous fab-

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rication. Eight years wandering around Cambodia with a leather bag of rubies during the Vietnam War? "You're putting me on," I said. "There really wasn't any Cambodian refugee, or really any Burma rubies, were there?"

Lou grinned at me. "No," he said, "but it makes a good story, doesn't it? You may want to use it sometime, Mr. Kingston, to explain why an experienced dealer like me, and an experienced gem buyer like you, were conned into thinking those Thai rubies I brought back for Jonathan Gilbert's were Burma goods. Cheong Fat Soon in Bangkok, incidentally, will confirm the story."

"It's a terrible story," I said, "but never mind. We'll never have to use it. For a minute there I thought you were trying to con me out of my $160,000."

Lou said, "$160,000? How do you figure that?"

"How do I figure it? That's our deal. You billed us twice what the Thai rubies are worth—$640,000. So you and I split $320,000 down the middle. Simple arithmetic."

Lou shook his head. "I figure it different, Mr. Kingston."

"Different? How?"

"I figure that since I did all the work and took all the risks I should get all the profits."

I goggled at him. "The whole $320,000? Are you crazy, Lou? You can't do that!"

"Why not? Who's going to stop me? Not you, Mr. Kingston. You can't very well report me to the police or to Jonathan Gilbert's, can you? You're in far too deep yourself."

I am not a violent man, but I was sorely tempted to lay hands on Lou Andrews. "But the whole deal was my idea!" I shouted.

Lou nodded complacently. "A good idea it was, too, Mr. Kingston. The best. I can never thank you enough for it. But thanks are all you get."

Furiously I said, "Listen, little man! One word from me can fix it so you'll never again be able to sell a single carat of anything to anybody in the trade! I can put you out of business overnight!"

"Sure, sure, I know that," Lou said. "But I already *am* out of business, Mr. Kingston." He brushed his hands across his empty desk top. "For years I've been wanting to get out of this rotten racket. And now I can afford to." He gave me his wrinkled smile. "From now on, Mr. Kingston, you'll have to find some other dealer to help you with your crooked schemes!"

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a *NEW* detective story by

H. R. F. KEATING

The period and place were a long time ago and far away—as time and locale are measured in the modern detective story. The period and place were Victorian London. A fabulous ruby, the Fire of Burmah, is the "moonstone" of the piece—in what might be called "a domestic little mystery," complete with, among others in the dramatis personae, Mr. Thomas Mulcaster, the autocratic and domineering master of the house; Dorothea, the bleary and confused wife; Maria and Toby, the obedient and disciplined children; the twittering poor-relation Cousin Julia; the skulking butler, Prain; and perhaps most Victorian-Gothic of them all, the quick and clever young governess, Miss Unwin . . .

MISS UNWIN GOES A-HUNTING

by H. R. F. KEATING

Had Mr. Mulcaster arrived home at his customary hour, Miss Unwin reflected later, the mystery of the Fire of Burmah ruby, that jewel hardly paralleled anywhere in Queen Victoria's London, might have remained a mystery forever.

But, as it was, her employer came back that evening earlier than usual, and in a state of some excitement, during the time she was down in the drawing-room with the children. So what she heard and saw in the ensuing quarter of an hour enabled her to bring the matter to what was on the whole a satisfactory conclusion.

Maria and little Toby, washed, with well-brushed hair and in suitable clothes, had been behaving well. She had felt they did her

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sufficient credit, a matter of some concern to her, young as she was for her post and not very long in it. Maria had played Herr Beethoven's Für Elise on the piano and had neither made any real error nor had smirked too abominably when she had reached the end. And if Toby's recitation of Mr. Wordsworth's "Daffodils" had required some prompting there had been no outburst of bad temper when the dreadful pauses had occurred.

Mrs. Mulcaster, too, tight-lipped and florid of face beneath her thick layer of pale powder, had paid the children more attention than she often did, nodding her head in time to the music, more or less, and murmuring how much she liked the poem, her own insisted-upon choice, when at last it had been raced to its triumphant conclusion, "and-then-my-heart-with-pleasure-fills-and-dances-with-THE DAFFODILS."

Toby had only just received his reward of a chocolate cream—quite unsuitable before his supper—when the drawing-room door had been thrust open and Mr. Mulcaster, tall, pomaded, luxuriant of moustache, carrying his full weight imperiously before him, had marched into the room, gone directly over to his wife, ignoring not only the children and Miss Unwin, as was to be expected, but also Cousin Julia, whom occasionally he would greet with a grunt, and both of his older sons, Richard and Alfred, more often than his spouse the recipients of his utterances.

But on this occasion there could be no doubt that it was his wife on whom his full formidable attention was fixed.

"Well, my dear," he said, his voice loud as if he were addressing a full meeting of the Worshipful Company of Soapmakers in his capacity as its Second Master. "Well, my dear, I wonder if you can guess at the nature of the gift I have brought you this evening."

Miss Unwin noted at these words that, in fact, in all the months she had been governess to the Mulcaster family its head had not to her knowledge ever brought his wife any gift, for all that he now implied that such generosity was habitual with him. She began to wonder why an exception was being made this evening.

"No, no, Thomas. What gift?"

Mrs. Mulcaster seemed thoroughly confused and even a little frightened.

Her husband bestowed on her a smile that mingled, to Miss Unwin's eye, equal amounts of triumph and contempt.

Then he plunged two thick red fingers into the pocket of his well-filled waistcoat and extracted from it a small black leather case. He

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thrust this under his wife's nose and with a resolute jerk of his thumb flicked it wide-open.

Inside, plain for all in the room to see, there glowed and shone a truly remarkable object, a ruby of enormous size and of a purity of colour that seemed almost beyond nature.

"Yes, my dear, the Fire of Burmah ruby, purchased by me this very afternoon and destined to grace my wife when she accompanies me to-morrow night to the Soapmakers Ball."

Mrs. Mulcaster seemed unable to greet the announcement with the delight it had plainly been intended to evoke, and at last it fell to Cousin Julia to do so, the poor relation ever in her handed-down dresses, somewhere in her thirties. Miss Unwin had never found out exactly where.

"Oh, what a pretty thing! What a very, very pretty thing! Oh, Cousin Thomas, how pleased Cousin Dorothea will be to be seen wearing such a jewel."

"You think so, Julia?"

But for all his curtness, Thomas Mulcaster seemed pleased enough with the enthusiasm the jewel had eventually aroused.

"But, Thomas," his wife at last managed to reply. "But, Thomas, my gown. I have ordered a gown of yellow silk for the Ball. That—the Fire—the jewel will not show to advantage against yellow."

"Then change the gown," Mr. Mulcaster replied. "Go to your dressmaker in the morning and have one made up in whatever colour suits. Red? Blue? I don't know."

"Oh, blue, Cousin Thomas. Blue would be altogether best. You are quite right. A deep, deep blue would show up the colour, the fire, of that pretty, pretty jewel to its height. Oh, yes, to its very height."

But Mr. Mulcaster was not interested in Cousin Julia's aesthetic opinions. He turned instead to his grown-up sons.

"Well, Richard? Alfred? What d'you think, eh?"

Richard, the elder, stepped forward—swaggering and spoilt as ever, thought Miss Unwin—and looked down at the pure red jewel. His eyes shone.

"That'll show 'em, Father," he said. "There won't be anything to match that to-morrow night."

"Oh, yes," Alfred, ever a follower, chimed in. "No one there will have eyes for anything else, I'll be bound."

Mr. Mulcaster stepped back, his features trumpeting fierce pride.

"Yes, boys. Old Dobson won't know where to look. Not after this. He'll go within the month. He'll have to."

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"And when it comes to the election for the Mastership," Richard said, "there'll be little doubt whom they'll choose. The man of wealth."

His father laughed with almost as much pleasure as if the election had been held already and the result just announced. He strode across to where, one on either side of Miss Unwin, his younger children stood, and thrust the still open jewel-case under first one nose, then another.

"Well, Maria? Won't you look fine with this round your neck one day?"

"Yes, Father."

"And Toby, eh? Aren't you proud of a father who can buy such a trinket and not miss the price. Eh? Eh?"

"What's a trinket, Father?" Toby asked, more interested in what was being said than in the jewel on its white satin bed in the black leather box.

But Mr. Mulcaster had not listened. Instead, so delighted was he with his prize, he actually demanded his children's governess' opinion.

"Miss Unwin? Ever seen anything half so good? One quarter as good, damn it?"

"It is beautiful, sir. A thing of true beauty."

"Beautiful?" Mr. Mulcaster gave a stallion's snort. "It's more than that, Miss Unwin. It's valuable."

He plucked the ruby from its case and held it up between two fingers, as red as the jewel but hardly as finely glowing.

"This gem that Miss Unwin is pleased to call beautiful," he pronounced, "cost me this afternoon no less than ten thousand pounds."

There came a gasp from nearly every mouth in the room. Ten thousand pounds! It was a fortune in itself, enough for anyone who possessed that much and no more to consider himself rich.

The response was the final tribute that Mr. Mulcaster required. He tossed the rich red stone once in the air, caught it, then returned it to its box.

"I'll put you in the cabinet in the library, my beauty," he said. "And in the morning the jeweller shall come and place you in a setting and on a chain that's worthy of the price I paid for you."

For a moment Miss Unwin thought of saying that the library cabinet, for all that its doors did lock, was hardly stoutly enough made to keep such a fortune in even over the short period of a single night. But she knew well that it was not her place to make such a

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suggestion; however much it might be simple good sense. To venture an opinion contrary to the head of the house was something to be done by one of the family, even by Cousin Julia with her almost non-existent learning, with her scanty powers of intellect, and her almost as scanty power of will. It was not for a mere governess, ever.

In any case it was high time to get her charges out of the room before the heightened atmosphere induced by the arrival of the Fire of Burmah provoked them into some silliness.

But before she had contrived to urge them towards the door, this sensible notion was shipwrecked.

"Damn it, is dinner not ready?" Mr. Mulcaster demanded, giving a sharp tug at the bell-cord beside him.

At once the door opened and Prain, the butler, entered. Miss Unwin guessed that he had been standing outside with an ear against the nearest panel, an attitude she had caught him in before. His skulking inquisitiveness was but one of the little secrets of the household that her quick eyes and quick ears had discovered and her mind sorted away in the time she had been in her post. She knew from what she had overheard Jane, the housemaid, giggling over, such things about the Master that she was not supposed to know. She knew that William, the knife-boy, when all was quiet in the night, often rose from his pallet in the scullery to take sugar lumps from the big bag in the larder. She knew that Mrs. Mulcaster drank as much port in secret as her husband did openly. She knew that Richard and Alfred boasted to each other of spending their generous allowances in ways their mother certainly would not have approved of.

"Prain, dinner? Is it ready?"

"It wants a quarter of an hour till seven o'clock, sir."

"If I needed to know the time, Prain, I would have damned well asked. It's dinner I want. Dinner!"

Miss Unwin wondered whether the butler had now advanced far enough into the room for her to be able to usher the children out. But once more her plans were defeated.

"And the port, Prain," Mr. Mulcaster boomed. "Last night it tasted of violets. Violets. I won't have it, d'you hear?"

Without waiting for Prain's explanation he turned his glare suddenly on to Miss Unwin.

"You," he said. "You. Has Maria been playing with flowers out of the garden on the dining-room sideboard? Is that it? Eh? Eh?"

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"Maria does like to arrange flowers, sir. But I can promise you she does not do so in the dining-room."

And as if to emphasise her denial, Miss Unwin put a hand on the shoulder of each of her charges and swept them before her through the open door, causing Prain to step sharply aside, and on towards the stairs, their supper, and bed.

"Miss," said Toby when he had been at last tucked in. "Miss, will you sing it?"

"You're a big boy now to be given a lullaby."

"But will you, Miss?"

So Miss Unwin sang:

" 'Bye, Baby Bunting,
Daddy's gone a-hunting.
He's gone to fetch a rabbit skin
To wrap the Baby Bunting in,
'Bye, Baby Bunting."

It was when Miss Unwin had been in bed herself for a good hour and was fast asleep that the theft of the Fire of Burmah was discovered. She learnt about it when there came a frenzied tattoo of knocking on her door and she sat up sharply to hear Jane calling, "Miss, Miss. You're to come downstairs directly. Oh, Miss, the Master's great ruby is gone and there's such a ruckus as you never heard."

Miss Unwin left her bed, groped in the dark over to where across the back of the single chair in the room she had draped the coat that served her as a dressing-gown, contrived, still in darkness, to pull it round herself, and then made her way over to the door, beneath which she could make out a wavering line of light that must come from Jane's candle.

Jane was standing there in her night-dress with a shawl across her shoulders, looking in the flickering candlelight pale with shock.

"The children?" she asked her. "No one has woken them, I hope."

"Oh, yes, Miss. The Master said they was to be. Everyone in the house, he said. We're all to come to the dining-room. An Inspector of police is on his way round. Oh, it's horrible, horrible."

There were tears in her voice.

"Now, weeping won't help," Miss Unwin said to her sharply. "Who woke the children? Where are they now?"

"Oh, Miss, it was Lizzie. She's trying to get them dressed."

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"Very well, Jane. Light me to the nursery, and then you had better go down and join the others."

"Yes, Miss. But, oh, Miss, do you think we shall all be arrested and put into prison?"

"Of course not. No one will think that any servant has done this. There must have been a burglar. Now, go along down."

But, supervising the nursery-maid in getting Maria and Toby into some clothes and busy reassuring them, Miss Unwin found she was not as sanguine about who might be suspected as she had made out to Jane. After all, no doubt the presence of the Fire of Burmah in the cabinet in the library would be known to every one of the servants. Prain would hardly have kept to himself such a juicy piece of news, and a police Inspector would most likely think of one of the servants as the thief before anyone else.

She had little time, however, for such reflections. Lizzie had woken the children in as much of a state of alarm herself as Jane had been and both her charges by now were thoroughly bewildered and frightened. Yet it did not take her long, despite this, to get them downstairs. Even before she had entered the nursery she had heard Mr. Mulcaster's voice booming up the stairway in a passion of anger, and she knew that the least delay would bring his wrath down on their heads, and hers.

In the dining-room every single member of the household had assembled, from Mrs. Mulcaster, eyes almost closed as if she was suffering from a thunderous headache, to William, the knife-boy, trying at twelve years of age not to let tears appear. Happily Miss Unwin's arrival there coincided with that of Inspector Harper from the nearby police station. So she and the children escaped Mr. Mulcaster's attention while the Inspector listened to his furious denunciations, and by putting in an occasional question managed to extract a reasonably coherent account of what had happened.

The jewel, it seemed, must have been taken from the cabinet in the library much earlier than the actual discovery of the theft. Mr. Mulcaster had, altering his customary pattern, gone into the library in the evening. He had had the intention of taking another look at his new and wonderful acquisition. But by chance he had been prevented from going to the cabinet, which stood in the darkest corner of the room, because he had seen on the library table the attaché case he had brought home with him, into which he had stuffed as he had been leaving his office to conclude the purchase of the Fire of Burmah, a number of letters that had arrived by the last post of

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the afternoon. It had occurred to him that he ought to see if any of them was important. One had been, and he had taken some time sitting at the library table to draft a reply to be copied in the office the next day.

So it had not been until everyone else in the household had retired to bed that he had gone to the cabinet and had found its doors forced open with a paperknife which had been left lying on the floor beneath.

But another fact also emerged from Inspector Harper's questions. It had come out that a window in the dining-room, whose door was just opposite that of the library, had been left open after dinner. This was Prain's common practice except in the very coldest weather, done in order to disperse the smoke from the cigars that Mr. Mulcaster, Richard, and Alfred had enjoyed over their port. Anyone prowling into the garden could have entered this ground-floor room. "Prain, I hold you entirely responsible," Mr. Mulcaster had stormed when he had realised the situation, and none of the butler's assurances that he had been acting on direct orders received a year before did anything to placate him.

There was every evening, it appeared as Mr. Mulcaster shouted and Inspector Harper questioned, a period of about half an hour or a little more during which the window was open while Prain and his fellow servants ate their supper in the servants' hall. At the end of this meal it was the butler's custom to re-visit the dining-room, close the window, fill up the decanter of port in the sideboard cupboard, and tidy away anything that might have been left out of place when Jane had cleared the table after Mr. Mulcaster and his older sons had rejoined the ladies in the drawing-room on the floor above or had gone into the billiard room.

As soon as the whole story had at last emerged, Inspector Harper, fulfilling Miss Unwin's earlier fears, turned his attention to the servants.

"Not one single other object in the library was disturbed, sir," he said to Mr. Mulcaster. "So we have here a case of what we call inside knowledge. Whoever took that jewel knew just where to go, you see. They had been told, no doubt about it. Now, how long have your servants been with you, sir?"

Then it began. Mr. Mulcaster himself, of course, had been unable to answer the Inspector's question and Mrs. Mulcaster, who seemed dazed almost to the point of imbecility by the shock of the event, was of little more help. But at last Cousin Julia, twittering and

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writhing with embarrassment at having to address a police Inspector while in a state of déshabille, managed to make it clear that all the servants, with the exception of little William, had been with the family for at least three years. In a few moments then the Inspector reduced William to blubbering confusion, and it was only when Miss Unwin stepped in that his noise was stilled.

"Inspector," she said, raising her voice enough to be heard. "If the servants learnt from Prain where the jewel was to be put, they cannot have done so more than a few minutes at most before the dinner hour and it is William's duty then, I believe, to keep the stove fire constantly bright. Isn't that so, Mrs. Belton?"

She turned to the cook, stout and well-wrapped in half a dozen different shawls.

"Why, yes, Miss. That's true. Young William was right under my eye all dinner time and then on into our supper time too."

"So, Inspector," Miss Unwin continued, regardless equally of her employer's baleful glare and the butler's look of plain hostility, "It must be clear that William at least could not have informed any confederate of the whereabouts of the jewel. And I think you will find that his situation was common to all the servants."

Again Mrs. Belton came in with a spate of motherly confirmation.

"That's enough," Mr. Mulcaster interrupted her. "It's damned plain to me now where that jewel went."

"Oh, yes, sir?" the Inspector said, clearly nettled that his detective acumen had been usurped, however respectful in manner he felt bound to show himself.

"Indeed it is, Inspector. There is one person under my roof, let me remind you, who is little better than a servant and who dines entirely on her own. I advise you to look to Miss Unwin with some closeness."

He fixed on his newest employee a glare that would have frightened any of the clerks in his office into gibbering stupidity. Miss Unwin returned his gaze as steadily as she could bring herself to.

"Yes, Inspector," she said, "it is true that I do take my evening meal—it is more a simple supper than dinner—alone in the day nursery. And I suppose that at first glance it might well be thought that I had ample opportunity to go down to the library when everyone else in the house was engaged elsewhere, force open the cabinet doors—they are not very strong, I ought to have warned you, Mr. Mulcaster, of that—and steal the jewel. But there is one solid objection to this account."

"Nonsense," Mr. Mulcaster shouted.

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"And what might that be, Miss?" Inspector Harper asked, as quietly as the master of the house had been noisy.

Miss Unwin brought, with difficulty, a slight smile to her features.

"That I am a hearty trencherwoman, Inspector."

"What in the devil's name—"

But the Inspector cut in over Mr. Mulcaster's spuming ire.

"A hearty trencherwoman, eh? Then what were you served as that simple supper you spoke of?"

"A cup of tea and a lamb chop, Inspector. And, by a happy chance, it was a much fatter chop than I am accustomed to get. I daresay it was left over at luncheon. It seemed to have been twice cooked, though I finished it nonetheless."

Mrs. Belton broke in.

"Why, you are right, Miss, though I never thought you'd have noticed. The Mistress sent back her chop at luncheon, and I thought it had better serve for your supper."

"Inspector, what damned nonsense is this?" Mr. Mulcaster demanded. "What to the purport is it whether the woman ate a small chop or a large one? She is leaving this house with you for a police-station cell."

"I think not, sir. I believe I shall be found right if I say that Miss Unwin is claiming she was engaged in eating her large chop during all the time it would have been easy to go into the library unobserved. Is that so, Miss?"

"It is, Inspector. And Lizzie, my nursery-maid, who fetched away my tray can witness that the chop was eaten down to the bone."

And Lizzie, snivellingly, did just that. Nor did swaggering Richard Mulcaster's objections, at once supported by his brother, do much to alter the case.

"Well, yes," the Inspector agreed, "the chop could have been given to a dog to eat. But was there a dog in the house?"

And when Alfred suggested that the meat could have been cut off the bone and hidden or thrown out of the window, he was asked sharply if he really thought anyone would take such an unlikely precaution.

"No, sir," the Inspector said at last, turning to Mr. Mulcaster, "it ain't what we call a cast-iron alibi, but it'll do. It'll do."

"Then who in heaven's name, man, came in through the dining-room window and went straight to the cabinet in the darkest part of the library?"

"We shall find him, sir, never doubt that. There's more than one

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way to go about a business of this sort. And if questioning the household don't serve, then watching the criminal fraternity very likely will. I've informers a-plenty in that class, sir, and I daresay that before twenty-four hours have passed I'll hear just who's been boasting of having brought off this job. And it won't be very long after that until I have him behind bars, I promise you."

Mr. Mulcaster fumed for several minutes more, but in the end he had to allow the Inspector to leave and the rest of the household to go back to their beds.

But before Miss Unwin went up to her lonely top-floor room, she realised that there confronted her a difficult task that had to be tackled that very night. It had seemed altogether clear to her from what Inspector Harper's questioning had elicited that, despite his belief, there had been in fact no burglar. Who had gone straight to the cabinet in the library? Mr. Mulcaster had demanded. For all the bluster of the question there had been in it an element of shrewdness.

No one outside the house could have known that the extraordinarily valuable jewel had been put into its flimsy hiding-place, and, since the theft had taken place before the servants' supper had ended there could be no question of one of them having slipped out and spoken to a confederate, in itself a not very likely circumstance.

So the theft must have been the work of someone else in the house. The conclusion was inescapable. Yet she herself was in her employer's mind undoubtedly still held in grave suspicion. So, if she was to find out who among the family was the thief and bring home an accusation irrefutably, she must first prove beyond doubt that the theft had not been the work of a professional burglar.

This was something that she suspected she could do. But it would be at a fearful risk.

Yet it was a risk that must be taken.

"Mrs. Mulcaster," she said, her voice sharp, as the mistress of the house began blearily to go up the stairs. "Mrs. Mulcaster, might I have a private word with you?"

Mrs. Mulcaster turned, her eyes bloodshot and half closed as though she were still troubled with her headache.

"In the morning, Miss Unwin. In the morning."

"No, Mrs. Mulcaster. Two or three minutes now, if you please. I would not ask unless it were of importance."

Briskly she strode across to the dining-room door and held it open again. Almost as if mesmerised, Mrs. Mulcaster preceded her into the room.

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Miss Unwin closed the door.

"Mrs. Mulcaster," she said, "I have reason to believe that, during the time this evening when this room was supposed to be empty and with its window open so that a thief might have got in, you yourself were here."

"Here?" Mrs. Mulcaster's voice had lost all its slurredness. "In here, Miss Unwin? And, pray, why should I be in here?"

Miss Unwin did not reply. Instead she crossed over to the big carved sideboard, stooped, opened its cupboard door, and took out the filled port decanter. Rising, she brought the stopper up to her nose and sniffed.

"Yes," she said, "the odour of violets. The odour which Mr. Mulcaster complained of earlier this evening when he said the port tasted of flowers. I think rather that it is the decanter itself that is scented, and not with flowers but with the perfume of Wood Violets. The perfume of your complexion powder, Mrs. Mulcaster."

For a long period, while the dark slate-cased clock on the room's mantelpiece ticked out the heavy seconds, Mrs. Mulcaster remained silent.

If she vehemently denies this, Miss Unwin thought, Mr. Mulcaster, despite the evidence, will believe her and I shall lose my post and be moneyless once again.

"What if I refuse to say that I was here, Miss?"

"Then, most regretfully, I shall tell your husband what I have observed. I will show him the decanter. There are still traces of powder clinging to the stickiness at its top where you drank."

Again a deep silence in the big room, and the slow, grave ticking of the clock seemed to counterpoint the rapid thoughts which Miss Unwin could plainly see passing across Mrs. Mulcaster's blotchy countenance.

"My husband won't believe you, Miss. He shan't. You'll be dismissed. Without notice."

Miss Unwin drew in a breath.

"Then I shall go to Mrs. Dobson and tell her that I feel the Master of the Soapmakers Company should know of the injustice done to me. Mrs. Dobson will be sure to listen to me."

Another silence. But this one was short.

"What—what do you want me to do?"

"I want you to do no more than tell the truth to your husband and Inspector Harper to-morrow. Give them whatever reason you choose

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for your presence in this room, but tell them that no thief could have entered the house this way."

Mrs. Mulcaster's ruddy, port-aided complexion was as white now as the violet-scented powder that clung to it.

"If I must," she said at last. "But—but, Miss Unwin, if no one came in to steal the ruby, then—"

"Then we shall see," Miss Unwin said with firmness, and she turned and left the room.

But, in bed, the question to which she had given such a strongly noncommittal answer when Mrs. Mulcaster had tentatively voiced it, loomed up fairly and squarely in her mind. It would not let her sleep.

Mrs. Mulcaster had been in the dining-room with its open window during the time that it had provided a way of getting to the library and the Fire of Burmah. At that same time the servants had all been in the servants' hall together eating their supper. So one of the family must have left the others on some excuse and have taken up the paperknife from the library table, forced the flimsy doors of the cabinet, and seized the jewel. It would require hardly two or three minutes. Any one of them could have done it, even, though it was hard to imagine, Cousin Julia. Very little force would have been needed.

Yet would the rest of them, when they realised just what the situation was, admit that one of their number had left the room alone at any time? And it was hard too, almost impossible, to see why one of the family should have stolen the jewel. Richard and Alfred might seem most likely. Yet neither could have any valid reason for doing so. Their father had always given them more than enough money, too much indeed.

Could the disappearance possibly have been the result of little Toby playing a joke? But, no, she had lulled him to sleep herself, and she was not one to be deceived over a matter like that. Equally, Maria had been peacefully sleeping by the time she herself had consumed that providentially large chop and she had been safely reading in bed beforehand.

One more thought entered her head. Could Mrs. Mulcaster herself have not only been a thief of her husband's port but a thief of his precious gem as well? Yes, she could have been. Yet was it likely? No, it was ridiculous. She had no reason, no reason at all, to have done such a thing.

If this was the best she could think of, she must make up her mind

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to go to sleep. To-morrow would not be an easy day, whatever happened.

She composed herself upon her pillow, which was none too soft.

Then, just as sleep at last began to come, into her mind clearly as if it had been written out like a Proposition in Euclid down to the final Q.E.D., the answer presented itself. There was, after all, a good reason why the matchlessly beautiful jewel had been appropriated. One person, and one only, did have a need to possess it. And she herself had been given a clear indication of just what was the nature of that need. Yes. Yes, indeed.

With a faint smile on her lips Miss Unwin allowed sleep to enfold her.

The next morning she set about carrying out the plan she had seen to be necessary if the business was to be concluded in any way that was satisfactory.

Hardly had the children finished their breakfast than she set poor Maria a chapter of Ward's General Knowledge to learn by heart, an educational method she preferred not to rely upon in ordinary circumstances, and then marched little Toby out into the garden, where it was much less warm than she would have liked.

But, despite his protestations, she announced that they were to play a game.

"But, Miss Unwin, I'm freezing."

"Then in a minute or two if you run about you'll be warm. Now, look what I have here."

From her pocket she produced her thimble, a much-worn brass object.

"We'll play Hunt the Thimble," she said.

"But, Miss Unwin, that's a girls' game."

"And little boys can play it perfectly well too. Now, shut your eyes and count to twenty while I hide the thimble, then see if you're cleverer than me."

The challenge was quite enough to ensnare Toby. He shut his eyes.

Miss Unwin ran off a few steps, stooped by a laurel bush, then straightened up, and put the thimble back in her pocket.

". . . eighteen, nineteen, twenty."

Toby ran unhesitatingly over to the bush where, Miss Unwin knew from experience, he must through almost closed eyelids have seen

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her stoop. She allowed herself a smile at his immediate chagrin, and then waited a minute or two while he hunted elsewhere.

"I know, Toby," she called out then, "we need someone else to play. Then whoever finds the thimble can be the next one to hide it. I'll go in and see if Cousin Julia will come and join us."

She left the boy morosely hunting, entered the house where Cousin Julia, she knew, would still be at the breakfast table lingering over a last cup of tea, and went hastily upstairs.

Faced a little later with the request, Cousin Julia proved as reluctant as Toby had been to go out into the garden under what was clearly a chilly and forbidding sky. But Miss Unwin brooked as little rebellion from her as she had from Toby, though her way of achieving her end was somewhat more tactful.

So within five minutes Cousin Julia, huddling into the handed-down coat that Miss Unwin had fetched from Cousin Julia's room for her, had joined in the game. With a little encouragement in the way of "Hotter, hotter" and "Colder, colder," Toby soon found the old brass thimble almost exactly in the spot where he had first looked under the laurel bush, where indeed Miss Unwin had placed it as soon as she had come out again.

Then Toby hid the thimble, and Miss Unwin, peering equally shamelessly through her slitted eyes, found it after a decent interval.

So it became her turn to hide the thimble once more, and, secure in the knowledge that Toby would be observing her every movement, she headed straight for a fine clump of catmint that grew at the corner of the flower border.

". . . nineteen, *TWENTY*."

Toby had counted more than twice as quickly as Cousin Julia, and the moment his eyes were fully open he ran straight across to the hiding-place. He burrowed among the catmint's silvery fronds for a moment or two and then let out a tremendous shout.

"Miss!"

"Toby, what is it? Don't shout so loudly. Your mother is still in bed."

"But, Miss. Miss Unwin, look. Look, what I've found!"

Miss Unwin and Cousin Julia, intrigued by the note of utter wonder in the boy's voice, hurried over.

There, sure enough, in his little, as yet still soft hand lay the Fire of Burmah ruby.

"Toby, what a clever boy you are. That wicked thief must have

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dropped it as he ran off. Now, you go straight in and see Papa and show him what you found."

The boy set off to the house, plump little legs going like a steam-engine.

Miss Unwin turned to Cousin Julia.

"So," she said, "all's well that ends well, don't you think?"

She sighed.

"How pleasant it would be," she went on, "if those of us who truly loved beautiful things were wealthy enough to possess them, to cherish them, perhaps in some secret place like the back of a handkerchief drawer, secret if somewhat obvious. To cherish them there as they deserve to be rather than to worship them only for what they fetch in the market. Do you know, I think, curiously enough, that you and I are the only ones in all this household who really saw that jewel as a thing of beauty, as in your own words, 'a very, very pretty thing.' But we are not rich people, and so we must be content to look on from afar, must we not?"

Cousin Julia stood there on the close-cropped lawn and gazed at Miss Unwin. A tear formed at the corner of her eye and trickled slowly down her cheek.

"Yes," she said. "Yes, Miss Unwin, you are perfectly right."

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a *NEW* short story by

JOHN LUTZ

"Mother was a fourth-generation Corbet, a descendant of the town's founders. Family honor was her life . . . And there was such a thing as justice" . . .

THE LANDSCAPE OF DREAMS

by JOHN LUTZ

Electric-shock therapy does odd things to the memory. It causes periods of forgetfulness, with total disregard for the order in which events happened. And in that same random order it causes periods of remembrance.

Memories are imbedded something like fossils in the rock strata of our years. Dr. Melinger told me that once. Or did he only agree when I suggested that analogy? The thing is, mental therapy is like conducting an archeological dig, only when you reach the fossils, sometimes they seem to come to life. And there are plenty of interesting memories buried in everyone's layers of years, even in those of a forty-year-old Indianapolis housewife like me.

There's no point in telling you about what caused my problems—about Jeff leaving me, or our son Billy dying of a drug overdose. Maybe the misery of the present is what makes me think more and more, awake and in dreams, about my childhood on an Illinois farm less than two hundred miles from here. About the willow tree that grew outside my bedroom window.

Willows are the most beautiful of trees, the most graceful. And the saddest, which is why they're known as weeping willows. This one, which grew too near our two-story white-frame farmhouse, was one of the largest willows I've ever seen—unless I'm just remembering it through the eyes of a ten-year-old girl. It was higher than

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the roof, and its long drooping branches draped to the ground and waved gently in the flatland winds, reacting to every soft current as if it were some lonesome plant that grew on the bottom of the sea.

Its spreading branches formed a sort of shelter, a quiet still point of the universe that I could reach by climbing out my bedroom window onto a thick limb that paralleled the house. I could move inside the concealing branches of the huge tree, secretly observing the rest of the world through a soft green veil. I got into the habit of spending time in the tree on warm summer nights, embraced by its thick branches in the soft moonlight that filtered in through the dense foliage.

Sometimes I'd go into the tree during the daytime. Once, when I was lying unseen on one of the big limbs, I heard my bedroom window close. There was no way out of the tree. The branches that reached ground level were too slender to support even my ten-year-old body. I had to call for help. I remember my mother, beautiful then, pushing through the lower branches with her own arms like graceful limbs, looking up at me and smiling a tolerant, loving smile, reaching to help me down. It is one of those crystallized moments of childhood, precious ever after in my memory.

Mother believed I climbed into the tree from the ground, I'm sure. I never told her about how I often went there from my window when everyone thought I was asleep. She would have forbidden that, of course, and I would have obeyed. Now I know that if I had confessed that day, everything would be different.

The willow tree figures in my dream, but that's not surprising. Willows are ideally suited to the landscape of dreams.

In the dream, which occurs about every third night, I see through the tree's delicate green veil two people moving in the moonlit yard. My mother and father, talking softly, unintelligibly, in some foreign language, perhaps. They enter the barn and leave the wide door open so they can see each other in the yellow moonlight. Their words become louder. Father yells something about a phone call. Then he is on the ground. *In* the ground! A hole, a grave, has been readied in the barn's dirt floor. Mother raises her right arm to her forehead. She turns and drops something long and silver, and picks up a shovel. I can hear her sobbing as she fills in the grave.

Dr. Melinger was interested in the dream. My father, you see, ran away with my mother's sister, my Aunt Verna, when I was ten.

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Aunt Verna had been afraid to face Mother and had taken the train to Louisville, where Father later joined her. My mother never got over that. Religion and family were one and the same to her. Mother was a fourth-generation Corbet, a descendant of the town's founders. Family honor was her life.

We never mentioned Father or Aunt Verna after they ran away together. Not once. Not even when Mother was a frail gray woman in her sixties, still living on the farm.

I've been back to the farm a few times during the past ten years. It's the same, only most of the surrounding fields have been parceled off and sold to neighbors. And the willow tree was cut down long ago. It got diseased and had to be removed so it wouldn't rot and fall on the house. A tree that big could cause a lot of damage.

I had discussed the dream with Dr. Melinger the day before he introduced me to a swarthy man in a light gray suit, a Mr. Edwards.

Mr. Edwards smiled a nice smile and we shook hands. His hand was as dry as wheat chaff. I'd given Dr. Melinger permission to phone Mr. Edwards. I had loved my father, who was a tall man who thrived on hard work and listening to the radio.

"Mr. Edwards is the F.B.I. agent I told you about, Doris," Dr. Melinger said to me. "He wants you to help him get to the truth. And getting to the truth is what would help you."

"It seems that your father and Verna Corbet weren't heard of after they left Homesville," Mr. Edwards said.

"Everybody knew they ran away together," I told him. "They were ashamed. Things were different thirty years ago. Maybe they even changed their names."

"That's possible. In fact, it's likely. Still, Dr. Melinger and I think we should check into the matter further. For the sake of everyone involved."

"You think what I dreamed really happened," I said.

"Not necessarily."

"I think it did," I told him. I saw him glance at Dr. Melinger. I didn't care. I loved my father. I loved both my parents, and still do. But I understood my mother. She couldn't bear the thought of Father running away with her own sister. That struck not only at her, but at her sense of family honor. She was a Corbet; Aunt Verna was a Corbet. Mother had lost her mind for a while and killed Father. I loved her, but I couldn't forgive her for that. And there was such a thing as justice.

"I've talked to the sheriff in Homesville," Mr. Edwards said. "I'd

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like you to make a phone call to your mother, a call that will be recorded. The tape might provide the justification for digging up the floor of the barn where you saw your father buried in your dream."

I agreed to do that, and watched while Mr. Edwards and a bureau technician set up the recorder near the phone. Then I dialed Mother's number at the farm. She'd be home, probably watching a TV soap opera.

The phone rang twice.

"Mother, this is Doris."

"Why, Dorie . . ." She sounded surprised. I only phoned on holidays, usually. "It's good to hear from you. Nothing's wrong, is it?"

"I don't know, Mother."

Long silence. "What do you mean, you don't know?"

I felt a funny lump in my throat. I could hear soap-opera theme music in the background. "Mother," I said, "I think Father is dead. I think you had something to do with it. In the barn. I think he's under the barn."

Her intake of breath was like a harsh wind. She didn't say anything. Mr. Edwards had earphones on and was staring sober-faced down at the desk.

"Can you tell me it isn't true, Mother?" I asked.

"The barn's been torn down for years," she said. "There's a new barn."

"Then he's under where the old barn was," I said. "Can you tell me it isn't true, Mother?"

"What's gotten into you, Dorie?"

"Can you tell me it isn't true, Mother?" I pleaded.

"Dorie . . ." She was crying.

"Please, Mother!" And I was crying too. I hung up. I was afraid of what might happen if I didn't.

Mr. Edwards peeled off his earphones. "Thank you, Doris," he said. "I think this is what we needed. I can get the court order immediately. Do you want to drive to Homesville with us later today, to show us where the old barn was?"

Dr. Melinger nodded and smiled at me. A reassuring smile.

"I want to be with my mother," I said.

"Certainly," Mr. Edwards said. He shook hands with Dr. Melinger.

Mother was dead when we reached the farm. She had turned Father's old shotgun on herself. They wouldn't let me see her. Sheriff Hunicutt and Mr. Edwards held me on the porch.

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Beside the body there had been a note in Mother's handwriting, a confession that she had murdered Father because she couldn't bear the thought of him living with her sister Verna. Their relationship would be a constant embarrassment, a permanent dishonor to the Corbet name. Mother was too proud to accept that, so she had killed him.

I showed Mr. Edwards where the old barn used to be, then a deputy took me back to town while the rest of the men started to dig. As the patrol car pulled from the driveway, I saw the wide flat stump of the willow tree. There were a few graceful shoots rising from it, swaying in the breeze. Young growth, the way I was in the dream.

Later that day they told me they found Father's bones four feet under the ground. The sternum still bore the mark of a long-ago knife thrust. The vision from the willow had been true.

Dr. Melinger explained to me back in Indianapolis that I had suppressed the dark knowledge of my mother's murder of my father, because I didn't want to believe it happened. It wasn't uncommon, he said, for his patients to have blocked such occurrences from their conscious minds. The shock treatments had jogged my memory and brought things to the surface, like the firing of a cannon over a deep lake. I would be better now, he assured me, despite the tragedy of my mother's suicide.

For a while I believed him. Until I had the second dream.

Time plays tricks. Memories aren't like a slide show, in sharp focus and neat chronological order.

I was in the willow tree again, on a warm summer night thirty years ago, watching two figures through the sad green veil of branches, and listening.

"You can't be pregnant!" Father said to Verna.

"Precautions don't always work, Carl," Verna said patiently, though a little fearfully. "I'm going to have a child. Your child. Nothing can change that."

Below me my father seemed to become smaller, as if Verna's words had released a weight that suddenly descended on him. A wind ruffled Verna's flower-print dress that seemed strangely luminous in the moonlight and in the glare from the downstairs windows.

"My God!" Father said. "My God, what now?"

"We have to tell Myra when she comes back from town," Verna said. "There's nothing else to do."

"That's crazy!"

"There's nothing else to do, Carl!"

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But Father thought of something else, and in his panic he couldn't stop himself from doing it. They were standing near the corner of the house, where several tools were leaning against the porch rail. One of the tools was a pitchfork that father had intended to equip with a new handle. He jabbed Verna in the stomach with the pitchfork, and she squatted down with one hand on the ground, kind of like she was going to shoot marbles. Either Father or Verna let out a soft, desperate whine.

The pitchfork moved again, a familiar motion I'd seen Father make with it a thousand times to gather hay. Verna said, "Carl," and fell over backward.

Father was still standing, leaning on the pitchfork and staring down at Verna, when Mother drove up in the car. She got out and walked toward him, moving slower as she got nearer.

"Verna's dead," Father told her, not looking away from the body.

"I can see that." I had never heard Mother so calm. Her voice made me think of lemonade and shelling peas, and the wheatfield on a clear, still day.

"She told me she was pregnant," Father said.

Mother seemed to straighten, even as she stared down at Verna. "I suspected, Carl."

"How could you?"

"I'm not the fool either of you thought I was."

"I lost my head, Myra. I don't know how it happened. I killed her." He dropped the pitchfork and took a heavy step toward the porch.

"Where are you going, Carl?" Mother asked curtly.

"To phone the sheriff."

"No, you're not."

"I have to, Myra. Do you understand that I killed Verna? I killed your sister. I killed her baby."

"Turning yourself in won't change that," Mother said.

"I *have* to, Myra!"

"Carry her to the barn, Carl. I'll bring the shovel."

"What?"

"We're going to bury Verna. We have to get her out of the way before Dorie wakes up tomorrow. Then you can think about things, and if you still want to phone the sheriff, he'll still be there to answer the phone."

Father stood for a while with his hands on his hips.

"Pick her up and bring her, Carl. Damn you, you owe me *that,* after what you've done. You owe the Corbets that!"

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He shook his head, but he did what Mother said. He lifted Verna and carried her toward the barn.

Mother followed with the shovel.

All this must have happened on the same night that was in my first dream. But whether it did or not, I'll never tell Dr. Melinger about the second willow-tree dream. Mr. Edwards will never go digging for another body beneath the old barn floor, where Aunt Verna had been with Father all these years, but not in the way she'd planned.

I understand what happened now, and I understand Mother's pride, the Corbet pride. She could endure even the public knowledge that her husband had gone away with her sister, but not that he had impregnated Verna, then murdered her. A Corbet might marry a philanderer, but not a killer of a woman and her unborn. Mother would never rest if people knew that about her.

That's why she became a murderess herself. And though anyone who might have been hurt by father's crime is now beyond all harm, no one will ever learn the truth from me. Despite what's happened, I owe Mother and the other Corbets that much. I loved her and still do. That's in the blood, Corbet blood, and there's no changing it, not ever.

And me? I'm willing to accept what remaining silent means for me. I know I'll continue to dream, to be trapped within the branches of the weeping willow tree. Until my mother helps me down.

DETECTIVERSE

GRAVE ERROR

by ROSEMARIE MALLORY

The accused, the jury observed.
The evidence grimly was served.
"Innocent," she pled,
"He's not really dead,
Just prematurely interred."

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a *NEW* Inspector Dover story by

JOYCE PORTER

How should we describe Detective Chief Inspector Wilfred Dover of Scotland Yard? His mental prowess? Well, no. His physical agility? Hardly. His bulldog persistence? For food, drink, cigarettes, and other creature comforts—high marks. For personality or charisma? Heaven forbid. Milk of human kindness? Skimmed. Lovable traits? Take your pick—zero or zilch . . . Yet, we confess, we like to read about the old snarler . . .

DOVER WEIGHS THE EVIDENCE

by JOYCE PORTER

"Wadderyemean, there's no bloody body?"

The young policeman who'd been left holding the fort looked close to tears. It was his first encounter with Scotland Yard's most notorious detective, and nothing in his training had prepared him for the shock. That appallingly scruffy overcoat, that greasy bowler hat, those mean little button-black eyes, that sullen pasty face . . . "The gentleman died in the ambulance on the way to hospital, sir. Didn't they tell you?"

Having gazed his fill at the fatal staircase, Detective Chief Inspector Wilfred Dover shoved his way back through the narrow doorway into the main hall and sat down weightily on the nearest chair. He merged well into his surroundings which were comparably decrepit, unlovely, and none too clean. "Nobody," he whined in a bid for cheap sympathy, "ever bloody well tells me anything."

The young policeman glanced curiously at the third member of their little group who was standing as far away as he dared in an

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attempt to disassociate himself from the proceedings. Detective Sergeant MacGregor, Dover's long-suffering assistant and whipping boy, was dying to point out that he had regaled his chief inspector with every known fact about the case in the police car which had brought them racing out to one of London't grottier suburbs, but—police discipline being what it is—he didn't say a word. Besides, he blamed himself really. Who knew better than he did that, when Dover sat there with his eyes closed, it wasn't because the fat old fool could concentrate better that way.

"Cat got your tongue?" Dover muttered.

The young policeman pulled himself together and decided to keep it short and simple. "The deceased is a Mr. Humbert Mew, sir, aged about fifty-five. He was a faith healer, sir."

"'Strewth!" said Chief Inspector Dover in tones of the utmost disgust.

"He was due to hold one of his faith healing sessions here in the Quine Street Social and Recreation Rooms at two o'clock this afternoon. It's a regular booking, sir. Well, Mr. Mew arrived at about half-past one, sir, with his wife and a Mr. Glossop, his business manager."

"Business manager!" scoffed Dover.

The young policeman struggled on. "While the other two were getting the hall ready for the meeting, sir, Mr. Mew retired as was his custom to the room at the top of the stairs for a period of quiet preparation. As you will see, sir, the stairs are shut off from the main hall by this door here.

"It was Mr. Mew's habit, sir, to remain alone in that upstairs room until two o'clock. Meantime, the people who'd come to attend the meeting and consult him were gathering here."

Dover looked round with little enthusiasm. Several rows of uncomfortable chairs, on one of which he was sitting, had been set out facing a small raised platform at the far end. And that was it, apart from some grimy windows set up high near the ceiling and a badminton court laid out on the floor. "One born every minute," he commented sourly.

"Yes, sir."

"Mind you, laddie," added Dover with more than a touch of self-pity, "when you've got a stomach like mine, faith healing's about all there is left."

MacGregor knew what could happen if Dover's stomach was allowed to intrude into the conversation. He smiled at the young po-

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liceman in an effort to show the human face of Scotland Yard. "You collected names and addresses?"

"I've got a list for you, Sarge."

"How many are there, by the way?"

"About thirty, Sarge."

"Damn!" snarled Dover, for whom work was a four-letter word. "We'll be at it till Christmas!"

It was not the young policeman's place to speculate on the accuracy of this prediction so, after a moment's understandable hesitation, he went on with his story. "At two o'clock, sir, Mr. Mew came out of his room and began to descend the stairs. That's when it happened. People out here in the hall said they heard a sort of shout followed by several bangs and thuds. Mr. Mew was quite a heavy gentleman, sir, and those stairs are pretty steep.

"Well, Mr. Glossop was sitting just here by the door and he got to the foot of the stairs first. He realized Mr. Mew was in a bad way and an ambulance was phoned for. P.C. Roberts and I were on patrol in the vicinity and we also responded to the call. Mr. Mew was removed in the ambulance, sir, accompanied by his wife, and P.C. Roberts began questioning the people in the hall in an endeavor to procure an accurate picture of the incident.

"I proceeded to examine the staircase, sir. I ascertained that, although uncarpeted and none too well lit, it couldn't be classified as dangerous. I was about to attribute Mr. Mew's fall to an unfortunate trip or him coming over faint or something, when my eye was caught by an object on the wall at the top of the staircase. It was a small hook, sir. Painted black and screwed into the wall about a foot up from the second tread down, if you follow me, sir."

Dover was glowering balefully. So this was the interfering little upstart he had to thank for a ruined weekend!

"Perhaps I could show you, sir? It would be easier than trying to explain."

The suggestion that Dover should rise to his feet fell very flat.

"Well, sir, I investigated further and found another similar hook, in the baluster, opposite the first one. Hanging down from this second hook, on the outside of the staircase, was a length of thin twine, also painted black. There is a coat rack on the side of the staircase, sir, and the length of twine was partly concealed behind the coats hanging there.

"I checked the length of the twine, sir, and noted that it had been snapped in two. I had no doubt that it had originally been stretched

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across the staircase between the two hooks, and that Mr. Mew had broken it in his fall. With the release of tension it had then flipped away to hang down the side of the staircase."

Dover's eyes weren't closed this time, but they were glazed.

The young policeman hurried to get it over. "At this moment, sir, news came through that Mr. Mew was in fact dead and I had no hesitation in concluding that we had a case of murder. P.C. Roberts concurred, sir."

"Good work, constable!" said MacGregor, because somebody had to. "So you think somebody fixed up this booby trap after Mr. Mew had retired to the room upstairs so that when, at two o'clock, he emerged to conduct his healing session, he'd trip over it, fall, and kill himself?"

"That's about it, Sarge. Except I think the screws could have been put in much earlier. It's unlikely anybody would spot them and it would save time. All the murderer would have to do then is thread the twine through and tie it tight. Presumably he was counting on being able to remove all the evidence in the confusion after Mr. Mew's fall. If he'd managed that, of course, we'd have just put it down as an accident."

At this point, and somewhat belatedly, a police photographer and a fingerprint expert arrived and the young policeman broke off to conduct them to the scene of the crime.

Dover crooked a finger at MacGregor. "Come on, this place gives me the creeps!"

"But hadn't we better wait to see if they find anything, sir? There may be prints or—"

"The day I rely on bloody scientific experts to solve my cases for me'll be the day I hang my bloody boots up!" declared Dover who favored what one might call, for want of a better word, the psychological approach.

"Where were you thinking of going, sir?" MacGregor was quite prepared to learn that the old fool fancied a cinema or even a stroll along the Embankment in the pouring rain.

"We'll go and see the wife," said Dover. "The odds are she croaked him and we might get a confession if we get to her quick."

With a sinking heart MacGregor realized that they were probably in for another dose of the Dover Method. This was a simple technique which consisted of harassing the spouse of the deceased until he or she pleaded guilty to murder. It was surprising how often it worked.

Mrs. Mew, however, got Dover's measure very quickly. Good-look-

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ing and in her late thirties, she spotted that he was unlikely to be lured from the path of duty by womanly wiles, so she gave him a chair by the fire, a stiff drink and a cigarette—and got herself crossed off the list of suspects before you could say Adelaide Bartlett. She forestalled any doubts as to the depths of her grief with the same skill.

"I was never one to wear my heart on my sleeve, even as a girl," she confided. "Not that Humbert and me was exactly setting the world on fire. It wasn't so bad before he went on this faith healing kick, mind you. He'd got a good job and things were ticking over quite nicely. Then, a couple of years ago, he discovers he's got this strange power and he chucks everything else clean out of the window. Not that you can't make a bomb out of faith healing," she admitted ruefully, "but Humbert wasn't interested. Said he couldn't prostrate his gifts for sordid gain."

"Was it a con?" asked Dover.

"You tell me, dearie! All I can say is sometimes he really did do extraordinary things. Not always, mind you. There was some he couldn't do anything for, but—well, take my knee."

Dover and MacGregor stared solemnly as Mrs. Mew stretched out one black-stockinged leg.

"You wouldn't believe the trouble I've had with it for donkey's years, and the pain. Humbert cured it in a matter of seconds. Honest! And he was wonderful with migraines. Or take old Mrs. Pretty—the doctor had given her a fortnight at the most when she called Humbert in and look at her now! She won't ever run a four-minute mile, but she gets around. Comes to our Saturday meetings at Quine Street as regular as clockwork. She was there this afternoon—and it's over a year since they reckoned the next stop was the crematorium."

"Ah, yes," said MacGregor quickly, "this afternoon!" He knew that, once Dover got comfortable he tended to lose what sense of urgency he ever had. "Perhaps you could tell us about that. Now, I understand that your husband always retired to that room at the top of the stairs before the meeting began."

"He sort of had to psyche himself up," agreed Mrs. Mew, solicitously refilling Dover's glass. "Fanatic about that, he was. Half an hour's complete peace and quiet. Me or Glossy used to stay by the door to see nobody got through to disturb him."

"Glossy?" grunted Dover, just to show he had the interview well under control.

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"Glossy Glossop, our business manager, dear. You've got to have somebody to see to all the arrangements. Glossy's like me—he wanted Humbert to break into the big time."

"Who was on guard today?" asked MacGregor.

"Glossy. He wouldn't let anybody through."

"Nobody at all?"

Mrs. Mew gave Dover another cigarette. "Only the ushers, dear. We let them hang their coats up at the foot of the staircase. It's one of their little perks. There is a sort of cloakroom by the entrance, but it gets a bit of a scrum there and we have had the odd thing pinched. Oh, lord!" Mrs. Mew's face crumpled. "I've just thought! What's going to happen about my bad knee now?"

MacGregor, while not unsympathetic, had more serious problems on his mind. "What are the names of these ushers?"

"There's only two, dear." Mrs. Mew tucked her handkerchief away down her cleavage. "Cyril Watterson and Douglas Pretty."

"Does Mr. Glossop hang his coat at the bottom of the stairs?"

"Of course he does, dear."

"And how about you, madam?"

Mrs. Mew was nobody's fool. She grinned. "Oh, I kept mine on, dear. That hall can strike very chill. You can ask anybody. I was wearing my mutation Chinese mink, you see, so they're sure to have noticed."

There is no doubt the questioning would have proceeded even more penetratingly if there hadn't been an interruption. The door burst open and a sporting-looking gentleman came breezily into the room.

He was only momentarily disconcerted at finding the place full of policemen. "Ah," he said, deftly slipping his bunch of keys back into his pocket, "you left the front door ajar, Iris." He indicated the bottle of champagne and the large heart-shaped box of chocolates with which he was burdened. "Just thought I'd pop round and see if I could cheer things up a bit. I'm Glossy Glossop, by the way."

MacGregor turned a little ostentatiously to a clean page in his notebook while Mr. Glossop made himself at home, pouring out a drink and sitting on the sofa next to Mrs. Mew. "You were the late Mr. Mew's business manager, I understand."

"Business manager, publicity agent, counselor—what's in a nomenclature, squire?" Mr. Glossop dropped his voice to a sincere baritone. "I was Humbert's *friend*." He got his cigar case out and offered Dover one.

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"How long had you been with him?"

"Eighteen months. Long enough to fully appreciate the man's amazing gifts but not long enough, unfortunately, to persuade him to share them with the waiting world. Still, we were working on him, weren't we, Iris, my love?"

Dover took his free cigar out of his mouth and examined it with considerable alarm. The back of his throat felt as though somebody'd been at work with a blowtorch. He put the next question himself, just to make sure his vocal cords hadn't been damaged beyond recall. "What did you do before you became a con man?"

It was difficult to offend Mr. Glossop. He explained good-naturedly that he'd been a commercial traveler of sorts.

He was much more precise when it came to describing how Mr. Mew had fallen to his death that afternoon. When Mr. Mew had withdrawn for his normal bout of spiritual preparation, Mr. Glossop had, as per usual, taken up his station out in the main hall. It was a chore to have to sit there guarding the door for the best part of half an hour but bitter experience had shown how disastrous it was to allow the faith healer to be disturbed.

"Remember what a shambles we had at Brighton, Iris? When that stupid Welsh female broke in on him? God, the state he worked himself into he couldn't have cured a side of bacon. No, I learned my lesson at Brighton, squire. Since then, nobody—but *nobody*—has got past me."

MacGregor looked up. "But you did let some people go through the door from the hall, didn't you?"

"Only Pretty and Watterson. I don't count them. They know what the score is."

"Did they arrive together?"

"No, Pretty came first. Young Watterson didn't show up till ten to two. I remember wondering if the spotty little git was going to let us down again."

"How long did they take, hanging up their coats?"

"Not long enough to fix that trip wire up, if that's what you're after, squire. A few seconds."

"But the door from the hall was closed, wasn't it? You couldn't actually see them?"

Glossy Glossop handed his empty glass to Mrs. Mew and she got up to replenish it. Dover gulped the dregs of his down at top speed so as to save his hostess' legs.

"Out of sight is out of mind, squire! We had a number of newcomers

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at this afternoon's session and I wanted our two acolytes out there mingling. That's what they're appointed for—to mingle."

MacGregor watched Mr. Glossop carefully. "And how long were you hanging your coat up, sir?"

"Look, squire"—Glossy Glossop leaned forward to make sure MacGregor got the message—"I had a damned good look at those screws your young bobbie found, and do you want my considered opinion? Five minutes! At least. That's if you'd got everything ready to hand like tools and things. Now, in those meetings in the Quine Street Rooms I'm a public figure, squire. If I'm not visible during the preliminaries, folk are going to notice, believe me. Five minutes? If I'm not back in that hall in ten seconds flat I've got a queue forming to speak to me."

"Collusion," said Dover.

He and MacGregor were back in the police car again, driving through wet and deserted streets.

"Do you think so, sir?"

"'Strewth, even you must have spotted what was going on there."

MacGregor clenched his fists in the darkness of the back seat. Dover's habit of regarding his unmarried sergeant as a sexual ignoramus had ceased to be even mildly funny several years ago. "Extramarital liaisons are hardly grounds for murder these days, sir," he said coldly. "Not when divorce is so easy. Besides, I doubt if either Glossop or Mrs. Mew would be so foolish as to kill the goose that lays the golden egg."

"What golden egg?" demanded Dover. "That's what they kept sniveling about—that What'shisname wouldn't turn himself into a money spinner."

"I fancy they were both better off financially with him, sir, than they are likely to be without him."

Dover switched tactics and plumped for blinding MacGregor with higher mathematics. "So, what about the time element, eh?" he inquired. "If it takes five minutes for one person to fix those screws and things, two people could do it in half the time. It's like I said—collusion."

"Well, actually, sir," said MacGregor, "I've been thinking about the length of time it must have taken."

But he had left it too late. They had arrived at their destination and Dover was already legging it up the garden path with all the urgency of a man with a notoriously weak bladder.

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What Mr. Pretty thought when he answered the impassioned hammering on his front door to find a large fat man—red of face and askew of bowler—charging over the threshold and demanding to be told where the karzi was, is not known. Suffice it to say that he kept his head, and with Dover closeted in the downstairs powder room, it fell to MacGregor to make the necessary introductions, explanations, and apologies.

" 'Strewth," puffed Dover when he joined MacGregor and Mr. Pretty in the front room, "that was a near thing! I reckon that booze must have been off or something. If they weren't trying to poison me." He smacked his lips. "Left a hell of a funny taste in my mouth."

Mr. Pretty rose to the bait. "Would you like a cup of tea?"

Dover's sense of outrage was almost tangible. "Is that all you've got?"

"There's cocoa," said Mr. Pretty. "And I wonder if I could ask you to keep your voice down. Mother's in the next room. Mr. Mew's death has been a terrible shock to her and I've had to give her a sedative." He ran a trembling hand over his bald head. "I shudder to think what's going to happen now. Humbert Mew was all that's been keeping Mother alive. She was literally at death's door before we met him. And now . . . with him gone . . ."

He dabbed feebly at his lips with his handkerchief. "Mother is all I have, gentlemen. There's just the two of us. We've always been together and looked after each other." He swallowed hard. "I just don't know what I'll do if anything happens to her."

MacGregor began the routine questioning and it soon emerged that not only was Mr. Pretty unmarried but he didn't have a job either. Well, Mother had needed constant attention for many years and luckily there was enough money to keep them both in modest comfort.

Dover stared enviously at Douglas Pretty. Some people have all the luck! Not, mind you, that he—Dover—would have whiled away his leisure hours making crummy model airplanes, if he'd been blessed with a private income. Kid's stuff! He sneered comprehensively at the table which was littered with all the paraphernalia of Mr. Pretty's hobby—bits of cardboard and plastic, little tins of paint, glue.

Meantime, Mr. Pretty was wending his uninspired way through that afternoon's events at the Quine Street Rooms. He had little new to offer, even when Dover informed him, in a laudable attempt to liven things up, that he was the Number One murder suspect.

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Mr. Pretty, it turned out, had arrived at the hall well before the meeting was due to start. "I have to get Mother settled, you see, and she doesn't like to be rushed. And then I have this usher's job to do, too."

"Ah, yes! You and Mr. Watterson." Dover liked to demonstrate that, unlike some, he kept all the facts at his fingertips.

"He was late," grumbled Mr. Pretty half-heartedly. "Last week he didn't show at all. It makes it very difficult for me, you know. They're nearly all on crutches or in wheelchairs or old or something."

Mr. Pretty had not, of course, noticed if there'd been a piece of string stretched across the top of the stairs. He'd never thought to look. He'd just hung up his coat and gone straight back into the hall to get on with his duties.

Dover bestirred himself to ask a question. "Was Who'syourfather already in that room upstairs when you hung your coat up?"

"Oh, yes. Mr. Mew was always the first to arrive. He had to be, didn't he? Because of the key."

What key, for God's sake?

Mr. Pretty couldn't understand what his two visitors were getting so excited about. It was only the key to the Quine Street Rooms. "The caretaker lives a couple of doors away and he's a proper little dictator. He won't hand the key over to anybody except the person who made the booking. He won't even let Mr. Glossop have it just because it's Mr. Mew's name on his list." Mr. Pretty managed a sketchy smile. "Whatever else you can say about the Quine Street Rooms, their security was good."

Detectives like concrete things like keys, so MacGregor made a careful note of this one before pressing on with his interrogation.

No, Mr. Pretty couldn't imagine who would want to kill Mr. Mew—a man universally loved and respected and who had, after all, devoted his life to the service of others.

A disgruntled patient?

Mr. Pretty shook his head. "He never promised to cure anybody. He just said he'd do his best. And he was so obviously sincere that I can't see anybody bearing a grudge against him."

Could money be a motive?

Mr. Pretty looked shocked. "Mr. Mew wasn't making any money out of this! I know there was a small charge to attend the healing sessions, but that was only to cover the cost of the hall. People did make donations, of course. Mother did. But they were only small sums that people could afford."

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MacGregor sighed. He could see that Dover was getting restless. No doubt hunger was gnawing at the fat slob's vitals yet again. Or thirst. "One last question, Mr. Pretty. Where were you when Mr. Mew fell?"

"Oh, out in the hall. I was talking to that lady with the rheumatism in her knees. I rushed over as soon as I heard the sound of Mr. Mew falling. I found Mr. Glossop already on the scene. He was just standing there, looking. Well, I could see that Mr. Mew was still alive and I was just about to kneel down and see how bad he was when Mr. Glossop sort of pushed me out of the way. Quite roughly, actually. He told me to go and phone for an ambulance.

"Well, that seemed awfully silly to me because I'm really quite experienced when it comes to handling sick people, whereas Mr. Glossop isn't. I suggested it would be far better if he did the telephoning while I tried to do what I could for Mr. Mew." Douglas Pretty's eyes glinted almost spitefully behind his thick glasses. "Mr. Glossop seemed to lose his head completely. He shouted at me to do as I was told and stop arguing, and to shut the door leading out to the hall behind me because, by now, people were crowding round and staring in."

"Stingy creep!" said Dover as they waited for Mr. Watterson's landlady to tear herself away from the television set and answer the door. "Him and his damn cocoa!"

MacGregor rang the bell again. "I don't suppose there's anything much stronger in that household, sir."

"Which proves how bloody little you know about it, laddie!" retorted Dover, giving the door a kick. "If there's one thing folk keep handy for sick old ladies, it's brandy. 'Strewth, I could just do with a drop of Three Star to keep the chill out."

To Dover's fury, Cyril Watterson's hospitality didn't even extend to cocoa. His landlady provided two cooked meals a day (three at weekends) and it would have been a foolhardy lodger who asked for anything more. She didn't hold with smoking, either.

"Your problem, laddie!" said Dover, taking a deep drag on the cigarette he'd cadged from MacGregor.

Cyril Watterson, a gangly youth, scrabbled around frantically for something that would do as an ashtray. The best he could find was a tin of zinc ointment and it took him several attempts to get the lid off.

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"Nervous, are you, laddie?" asked Dover with a leer. "Got a bit of a guilty conscience, eh?"

Cyril Watterson shoved his hands deep out of sight in his pockets. "I hardly knew Mr. Mew," he protested, backing into a small table and almost knocking it over. "I only started going to him four or five weeks ago, and for all the good it's done me I might as well not have bothered. Bloomin' acne!" he moaned. "Girls think it's catching, you know." He remembered to whom he was speaking. "Not that I blamed Mr. Mew," he declared hurriedly. "I'm sure he did his best. And he's been no worse than the bloomin' doctors, has he?"

"You were acting as an usher this afternoon?" asked MacGregor.

"They're a bit short on people who've got their health and strength." Cyril Watterson was giving most of his attention to Dover. Dear God, the old beggar wasn't really flicking his ash all over the floor, was he? "Not that I minded helping out. Not when I thought Mr. Mew was going to cure my spots. But lately, well . . . It's not as though you ever meet any birds there, is it? I skipped it last week," he added proudly. "I went to that Rock Festival in Dorset. Smashing! No shortage of crumpet there, eh?"

As a would-be, latter-day Don Juan, young Mr. Watterson was singularly unconvincing with his prominent Adam's apple and his acne bouncing back the light from the naked, overhead bulb.

MacGregor averted his eyes. "Have you any thoughts about who might have killed Mr. Mew?"

"Glossy Glossop," said Cyril Watterson, flattered to have his views canvassed by experts from Scotland Yard. "I suspected him the minute it happened. I never bought that accident theory, you know."

If there was one thing Dover could do without it was this young punk's half-baked ideas. "You could have fixed that bit of string across as easy as him, laddie."

"Ah, but I haven't got a motive, have I?"

"Has Glossop?"

"Hasn't he just!" In his eagerness to assist the police in their inquiries Cyril Watterson sent a pile of girlie magazines slithering to the floor. He ignored them, and so did Dover. It was many a long day since the real thing had sent the blood coursing through the chief inspector's veins, never mind a few crummy photographs. "Money!" said Mr. Watterson. "Mind you, he's been fooling around with the fair Iris, but I don't reckon that as a reason for bumping Mr. Mew off. I mean, why buy a garage when you can hire a car?

Dover eyed Cyril Watterson with intense dislike. "What car?"

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Cyril Watterson decided, very sensibly, to come straight to the point. There had been instances when various clever devils had attempted to take Dover with them on their flights of fancy, and had ended up in the dock facing very serious charges. "I work in an accountant's office," he explained, "and I get a bit of commission if I introduce new business. So, I put it to Mr. Mew that it might be a good idea to have his books done properly, by experts."

"And?"

"He was very taken with the idea. Said Glossy Glossop was forever going on about them being short of money and Mr. Mew couldn't understand it because he was doing such good work and the people he helped always seemed to be grateful and generous. He said I'd given him a whole new slant on things. It wasn't that God or whoever wasn't providing enough of the ready, it was just that old Glossy couldn't cope with the bookkeeping."

MacGregor, at any rate, was interested. "When was this?"

"Two or three weeks ago. Well, that's it, isn't it? Mr. Mew tells Glossy he's going to have the books audited by my firm, and Glossy sees the game's up. I reckon he's been fiddling things for years. That's why Mr. Mew wasn't killed last week."

"What do you mean?"

Cyril Watterson sighed. If this was Scotland Yard! "Because I wasn't there, was I? Glossy maybe hoped I'd gone for good and all this business about proper accounts would die the death. But this afternoon there I was again. So Glossy had to knock Mr. Mew off quicker than that before he could contact me and give me the go-ahead. Get it?"

There is no doubt that MacGregor would have pursued the matter further if it hadn't been for the ominous rumbles coming from Dover's stomach. Dover feeling peckish could be pure murder, so MacGregor lost no time in rushing him off to the nearest pub which sold bar snacks.

A pork pie, two cheese and pickle sandwiches, a piece of apple tart, and three pints of best bitter later found Dover in a more amenable mood. Indeed, he would have been well nigh comatose if the pangs of hunger hadn't been replaced by those of indigestion.

Dover belched loudly before summing up his investigation thus far. "You can't win 'em all."

MacGregor was taken aback. Dover usually gave a murder case at least forty-eight hours before writing it off as insoluble. "But, sir—"

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"Waste of the taxpayer's money," said Dover, as if he cared. He leaned back and undid the top button of his trousers. "It'll be one of that lot we've seen," he added with a grunt, "but we'll probably never know which one."

"But don't you think we ought to follow up this business of Glossop and the money, sir?"

Dover's determination to throw in the towel overcame his natural instinct to speak ill of people. "Glossop doesn't look like a murderer to me, laddie."

Desperate times call for desperate measures. MacGregor got his wallet out. "Can I get you another drink, sir?"

"I'll have a large rum and peppermint. This flatulence is giving me hell."

Having thus purchased five minutes of Dover's butterfly attention, MacGregor couldn't afford to waste it. "I think we've been going slightly off course, sir," he began cautiously because Dover didn't take kindly to criticism. "We've been assuming the murderer set the booby trap *after* Mr. Mew retired to that upstairs room."

"Have we?"

"The screws could have been put in at any time, sir. Then, today, the twine could have been fixed across in a matter of seconds."

"That just makes everything even more bloody complicated."

"Not quite, sir. We'll need to check, of course, but because of the caretaker it doesn't look easy to gain unauthorized access to that hall. The murderer would therefore probably have put the screws in when he was there in the normal course of events. Say a week ago, at the last faith-healing session."

Dover, who seemed to be having some difficulty in focusing his eyes, refrained from comment.

"And our murderer would need to be pretty good with his hands, sir. Getting those screws in would be quite tricky."

"That eliminates acne-face, then!" said Dover as the mists cleared for a moment. "Fingers like a bunch of bananas!"

MacGregor began to feel quite hopeful. "We may be able to eliminate Mr. Watterson on another count, sir," he said encouragingly. "He wasn't there last week."

"It's all bloody theory," grumbled Dover. He removed his bowler hat and wiped the sweat from his brow. "And it still leaves three of 'em—What'shisname, Who'syourfather, and the woman."

"Only Glossop and Pretty, actually, sir. Mrs. Mew kept her coat on, you remember, and didn't go near the staircase. She wouldn't

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have had the opportunity of making even the final adjustments to the booby trap."

"So she says," mumbled Dover, feeling vaguely uneasy as the rum started fighting it out with the other contents of his stomach.

"She's not likely to have lied about something so easy to check, sir. Which leaves Glossop and Pretty."

Some people would have tossed a coin. Dover simply recalled that heart-shaped box of chocolates that had never been handed round. "It's Glossop!" He amplified this theory. "Cooking the books and adultery."

"I rather fancy Mr. Pretty, sir."

"You would!" sniggered Dover. He loved a good joke at the expense of his somewhat fastidious sergeant. "Just your type! Couldn't say boo to a goose. Besides, what's his motive? According to him, Whatdoyoucallhim was all that was keeping his mother alive."

Family affection was not one of Dover's weaknesses, so even he got the point. " 'Strewth, that's clever! Murder your rich old mother and the finger of suspicion's pointing straight at you. But knock off the one person who's keeping the old bird alive—"

"With his mother dead, sir, Pretty gets his freedom and the money while he's still young enough to enjoy it."

Dover thought hard. If it was MacGregor's theory, there must be something wrong with it. "It won't hold water, laddie!"

MacGregor frowned. "Sir?"

"When the Cat man—"

"The Cat man, sir?"

Dover's entire body wobbled with mirth. "Mew-cat!" he guffawed. "Get it laddie?"

One day, MacGregor promised himself grimly, he was going to cast prudence to the winds and stick a straight right on Dover's chins. "Very amusing, sir."

"You know your trouble, laddie," snarled Dover. "No bloody sense of humor. Well, like I was saying, when he fell downstairs, they all came running—right? And there was a bit of an argey-bargey about who should phone for the ambulance and who should stay alone with the body—right? Well, you nit, it was *Glossop* who insisted on staying and on having the bloody door shut! He wouldn't have done that if he hadn't been the murderer."

MacGregor could never keep that stuff about grandmothers and eggs at the forefront of his mind. "On the contrary, sir, that's the clincher! Don't you see? If Glossop was the murderer and he'd been

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left alone even for a couple of minutes back there by the staircase, he'd have removed those screws and the twine—the only evidence we have that it was murder at all. The fact that no attempt was made to get rid of such incriminating evidence proves that the real killer was never given the opportunity."

There was a long pause after Dover chewed this over. "Pity," he said at last.

"Sir?"

"You should have mentioned it earlier, laddie." Dover began gathering his overcoat round him and generally preparing to get to his feet. "We might have jostled What'shisname round a bit and got a confession."

"We could still confront him with the evidence, sir."

Dover shook his head. "It's all theory, laddie. Even the grounds for calling it murder are pretty shaky."

MacGregor didn't approve of intimidating suspects but, damn it all, they couldn't just fold their tents and steal away. "If we persuaded Pretty to confess, sir—"

"Easy as pie," agreed Dover. "One hard push and he'd spill the lot. Trouble is, it would never stand up in court. He'd get himself one of these shyster lawyers, shout 'police brutality,' and then where'd we be? No"—Dover made a supreme effort and achieved the vertical—"I reckon we're just going to have to forget about this one. Chalk it up to experience." He looked round. "You spotted the privy in your travels?"

"It's out at the back, sir. But, sir"—MacGregor so far forgot the most elementary rules of hygiene as to catch hold of Dover's sleeve with his bare hands—"we can't just let Pretty get away with murder."

"He won't get away with it, laddie," said Dover reassuringly. "What's the first thing the silly beggar'll do now that he's not tied to his old mother and he's got a nice bit of cash? He'll get married, won't he? That's punishment enough for any man. Now, you've just got time to get another round in, laddie, before they put the towel over the pumps. I'll be back in a minute."

"Q"

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a *NEW* short story by

CLEMENTS JORDAN

Boy, as he was known—his full name was James Gordon Clayton, Jr.—was the apple of his father's eye. He was the handsomest young man in the county, and the most popular. The young women adored him, and the other young men accepted him. Boy was surely destined for an enviably happy manhood . . .

PERIOD PIECE

by CLEMENTS JORDAN

My granddaughter considers herself a liberated woman. When her husband makes a remark she terms derogatory to women, she pokes her face into his and declares him a "male chauvinist." If her thirteen-year-old son turns on his charm to con her into chauffeuring him across town, she says sharply, "You're not crippled, Gordie! Walk or take the bus."

I consider her my masterpiece and am the biggest fan she could ever have. She will never know the reason for the training I gave her—and her mother and her aunts. She has experienced the wood-stove kitchens of my youth only through books and movies and does not really believe them. She has seen my brother only in a faded picture and remarked that he looked something like Gordie.

My brother had an elegant slimness, thick brown curls, and a cleft chin. He entered every room with the assurance of being the handsomest, best dressed, and most welcome person present. He had the sunny smile and sweet temper of one who has never been thwarted. He made my father's friends discontented with their sons. Girls followed him with wishing eyes. Other young men accepted him as their leader.

He was certainly the center of our household. Father made no

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secret of or apology for the partiality he felt for him. His heart's desire had been a son and it had seemed that it was to be denied. Four sisters had been born before him. Then mother had to wait—on doctor's orders—five years before risking another birth. Consequently she had been thirty-five when he was born. Father was ecstatic and satisfied to end the family. What more could he want than that perfect male child, a miniature of himself? The baby, of course, was James Gordon Clayton, Jr. but referred to as "the boy"; identification enough in a family of girls, but in my father's mind "the" set him apart from the entire universe. We all came finally to address him as "Boy."

My birth was an afterthought. I was born after mother had given up any thought of having more children. There were seven years between Boy and me. Had I been a boy, father might have been interested in me, but I was one of a negligible group referred to as "the girls," seldom called by name. "One of you girls make some biscuits for supper," he would order, or he would promise a neighbor "One of the girls will sew for the church bazaar."

By the time I was thirteen my three middle sisters were married leaving only my oldest sister, Grace, at home with us. I had heard father sneer that Grace had been an "old maid" since she was one day old. True, she had the tight mouth and prim manner usually associated with spinsters. Only Boy's blandishments could bring youth to her face.

In those years prior to the first world war the amount of work in that farmhouse was unbelievable. Without any labor-saving devices, electricity, or running water, with stoves that devoured wood, food that had to be prepared "from scratch," we women were busy constantly. Dressing Boy was a major project. Grace made everything for him that was possible to be made at home. When he told her that a bought shirt never fit as well as hers, she flushed girlishly, rubbed the red ridge made by her glasses, and agreed to make him still another.

When he praised a sweater Grace knitted, she looked through the pattern book and began planning the next. The neighborhood boys wore dress shirts only for special occasions. Boy must have a fresh one each day. I can see Grace now licking a finger to test the heat of a "sad" iron and frowning in concentration as she ran it over the starched gloss of a shirt.

I knew exactly how she felt. My daily service was the polishing of his riding boots. Under favorable conditions this took the better

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part of an hour; in bad weather much longer. But when Boy looked them over and said, "I guess I have the best boot polisher in seventeen counties," my arms forgot to ache. I was incandescent with pride as he blew me a kiss and strode out to ride away on his horse.

In addition to the latest farm appliances, father had a hired man. During harvests he hired others and he kept his crops down to manageable size. He could afford this because he had other money and was not dependent on crops as our neighbors were. When Boy was old enough to work, he did only a token amount and father kept the hired man. It never occured to him—or to us—to hire anyone to do "women's work."

It was small wonder that Boy was the best hunter, rider, and dancer among his contemporaries. He had more leisure time to practise. He had invitations for social events for miles around and it seemed to me he was always going out of the door dressed up. The prettiest girls were his companions. Every boy called him friend. He had it all.

He had enough without Alma. She had been my particular friend for three years, since I was thirteen. Her parents were dead and she had moved to our village with her grandparents and settled about half a mile from us. Her grandfather had bought a tiny farm—all he could manage at his age—and he had no money for hired help. Alma was shy; she had dark eyes and dimples when she smiled. We became instant best friends. In no time we were in and out of each other's house.

When she visited me after school, we did our homework at the kitchen table and giggled and shared private jokes as girls everywhere do. After she saw Boy, we had another interest in common. She fell instantly, completely in love with him—not that she put herself forward or even spoke to him unless he spoke first.

Knowing her as I did, I saw many signs: the way she lingered on the pages of Boy's pictures when she looked through our family album; the way her eyes deepened when he came into a room and drained when he left it. And she'd taken over half of my boot job, saying that with her help we could finish in half the time. She would never polish in his presence, but one day he had surprised us. He had smiled and said, "I see I've got *two* fairy helpers." Alma had blushed and dimpled. He told me later "Your little friend is going to be a looker one day." I naturally repeated this compliment to her and it produced a glow that I will swear showed on her very toes.

When we spent the night together, it was at her house for I shared

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a room with Grace who discouraged bedtime "foolishness." Her grandparents welcomed me warmly. It was easy to see that they adored Alma and a friend of hers was a privileged guest. We would whisper and giggle half the night away. She never mentioned Boy, but if I did, I could feel her stillness in the dark as though she absorbed every word.

We were sixteen—seniors—when the inevitable happened. We had different after-school activities. Alma was artistic. She painted beautifully and her pictures and posters were in great demand. The biology teacher had assigned a series of sketches of animals and butterflies. My forte was writing and I often had to stay late to work on school publications, so we did not often walk home together as we had done.

One afternoon, being unusually late, I took a short cut through the woods, knowing I'd probably muddy my shoes or get "stickers" on my skirt. Stopping to free my dress from a briar, I heard a smothered laugh. Peering through the gloom, I saw Alma leaning against a slim birch and Boy standing in front of her smoothing her hair. As I watched, he put his arms around her and bent to kiss her. I crept away.

I was not surprised. Alma had grown into a beauty. Her figure had rounded, her eyes were darker and bigger than ever, her smile was charming. I had seen Boy's interest of late and thought it only a matter of time before he asked her out. Her devotion had deepened over the years. I knew she would joyfully "keep company" with him. By the time I reached home, I had planned a wedding and wondered if I could persuade Alma to let her bridesmaids wear pink.

The next morning Boy said nothing about Alma. I almost bit my tongue to keep back the questions. At school Alma sparkled with happiness, but she said nothing in spite of several hints from me. Finally I gave up. Let them keep their secret a bit longer.

March, April, May passed, however, and she confided nothing to me and I will admit I grew miffed-proud. She needn't think I would ask. Toward June she became withdrawn. She lost her sparkle and there were circles under her eyes. She had not been home with me in weeks. I wondered if she and Boy had quarreled. But we were caught up in graduation activities and I was valedictorian and nearly sick with excitement.

A few days after graduation she still had not been to see me and I decided she might be avoiding Boy. I would go to her and maybe I could straighten matters out between them. Before I could start,

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however, her grandfather knocked at our kitchen door and asked for father. I greeted him gladly and began to ask about Alma.

"Not now," was his strange answer. It was after lunch, a time when farmers rested a while before returning to sun-drenched fields, so I called father who came, greeted Mr. Bentley, and asked him to sit down.

"Not here," Mr. Bentley answered strangely.

Puzzled, father led him to the sitting room—quite a formality for a drop-in neighbor. I had finished the dishes, and mother and Grace were stringing beans for canning. I simply walked out and listened at the sitting-room door and heard Mr. Bentley's painfully controlled voice, "Your boy is going to *have* to marry my girl."

"I'll be damned if that's so!" shouted father.

"I'll take it to court if he don't." Mr. Bentley's voice was steel.

"*Take* it to court. You'll just make a fool of yourself."

I was stunned, but somehow I forced myself back to the kitchen and began to string beans too. Mr. Bentley left by the front door and father charged into the kitchen and bellowed, "That big-eyed little snip is trying to get Boy in trouble!"

"Alma Bentley? I can't believe it—"

"I can," cut in Grace. "She's been coming here for years giving him the eye, shining up to him."

"She's nothing but a child, James, such a quiet little—"

"That's the worse kind—the little trollop. Got a hold on the boy before he knew what hit him. Well, you can damn well bet she won't get away with this."

Mother had begun to cry and father told her to "stop her damned sniveling," that he must have been crazy to expect any sense from her. He returned to the sitting room and brooded there the rest of the afternoon behind the closed door.

Father confronted Boy with Mr. Bentley's news as soon as he came in. "Can that child be yours?" he asked bluntly.

"Well, I—er—maybe," muttered Boy.

"You don't want to get married now," father told him. "You've got years ahead of you to be tied down. When your time comes, get a sensible girl who's got something to bring with her. Now, am I right?"

"Sure, Father," and seeing his approval, Boy said eagerly, "I told her already I couldn't think about marrying right now with a war on and all."

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"Well, leave it to me. That old fool said he'd take it to court, but I don't much think he will."

"But, James, it's Boy's child. We can't—" pleaded mother.

"Wait a minute now," father said slowly, "We can't be sure of that."

I spoke for the first time. "It is, too, Boy's baby. Alma's never looked at anyone else. I *know* her."

"Keep out of this, you. It's as much your fault as anyone's, having that little tramp under foot around here. Go to your room. I've got to think." He waved his hand at me as if brushing away a fly.

As I went out, I heard him say, "If he tries anything—"

The next week Boy got a summons and a date was set for a closed session in the judge's chambers, for which I was thankful. Maybe no one would know but our families. I didn't know father. "Think he'll get away with that? I was willing to do something for him but if he wants to fight dirty, he'll sure meet his match."

When I heard father's plan, it made me sick all over, especially when Boy agreed and looked at father admiringly. Mother begged with streaming eyes, "James, give them some money and let Alma go somewhere, have the baby, and get it adopted. Don't do this terrible thing to that child. It will ruin her whole life! James, I beg you—"

"That old goat brought it on himself. If he had behaved like a sensible man, things might have been different. He'll learn his lesson in court the way he asked for it."

Father's idea was that three of Boy's friends would go to court with them and swear that the child could just as easily be theirs.

We were canning blackberries that July morning. Crops never ripened at anyone's convenience. I was capping berries, Grace was sterilizing jars, and mother was stirring a potful of berries that were boiling on the stove. The sugary fumes were smothering and flies bunched like clusters of raisins on the outside of the screen. The Bentleys had passed the house in their buggy some time ago when Bruce Baker and Mert Holloway rode up on their horses. Father and Boy joined them at the gate and they would meet Sport Hawkins as they passed his house.

As we worked together in familiar team fashion, each doing her job and handing the others what was needed at the right time, we hardly spoke, but I felt I knew them well enough to guess their thoughts. Grace's clamped lips expressed her disapproval—of Alma. Mother's eyes were swollen with weeping for Alma, but Boy was her

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beloved son. She would forgive him and try to forget it had happened. I believe I still hoped that at the last minute Boy would refuse to go through with that terrible plan and that there would be a fairy-tale ending.

Of course father won. They rode triumphantly into the yard about lunchtime. Boy shouted gaily to Bruce and Mort the thing that turned my heart forever against him, "Thanks again. I'll do as much for you sometime." They came inside and father asked with studied casualness, "Don't you women intend to fix any lunch today?" Mother and Grace began to set the table. Boy, sensing that I was the only holdout said, "Sis—"

"Don't you call me Sis ever again." I tried to think of something scathing enough to finish with. "From now on you can polish your stinking boots yourself."

Boy looked at me for a long moment and his eyes chilled. Then he shrugged. He showed no trace of shame or regret. Just like that he tossed away my adoration. I'm sure he was already planning that Grace would add his boots to her frantic schedule.

Well into August I schemed to see Alma. It was simple enough to elude my family, but would her grandparents let me in? Would Alma herself see me? I had written begging to see her. She had not replied. Had my letter been intercepted? Then one day when I had been hanging laundry in the sideyard, her grandparents passed in their buggy going toward town. They kept their eyes straight ahead although they must have seen me.

As soon as they had passed, I sped down the road. Their door, country style, was unlocked and I went from room to room until I found Alma upstairs in her room. She sat in a rocking chair, slowly rocking and staring out of the window.

I knelt by her chair and took her hand. "Oh, Alma, I'm sorry! So sorry! What will you do?"

"He has made me a lying nothing. What can a nothing do?"

I began to cry as I had not been able to do all this time. She looked at me and her eyes softened a little. "Laura, what *can* I do? My grandparents have gone to see about selling our place. They thought they'd stay here their lifetime. I'm so worried about them. Look."

She pointed to a jagged hole in her window where someone had thrown an obscene note tied around a rock. At odd hours of the night unknown persons rang the doorbell. Her grandfather had once shot his gun into the darkness.

"I can only pray to get him away before something worse happens."

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Her unnaturally calm voice faltered and a note of—was it hate?—crept in. "After *this* is born, we'll leave here. If it wasn't for it, maybe I could study to be an art teacher, even an artist."

"Alma, you could anyhow, couldn't you? Buy a ring. Say your husband was killed in the war."

She laughed without amusement. "You must be reading a book," she said.

I stayed a little longer but did not succeed in making either of us feel better. I wanted her to promise she'd let me know when the baby was born, but beyond learning that it would be another two months, I got no satisfaction.

Only six weeks later I was feeding the chickens at dusk when a small boy thrust a note into my hand and ran away. The child had arrived. If I wanted to see it, I must come by myself.

I told my mother I was going to a girl friend's house and she was relieved. I had become so quiet and strange. Mr. Bentley silently let me in. The hate in his eyes informed me that he would rather have driven me away. The doors were shut along the hall. I did not see Mrs. Bentley.

Alma lay in her bed, the baby beside her crying softly, monotonously. It was three days old, she told me. "Shouldn't you be in the hospital?" I asked.

"I'm all right here. Grandmother takes care of me."

In spite of its crying, I thought the baby looked like Boy. There were the cleft chin and the curly hair. I picked up the baby and it stopped crying, but its mouth worked. "This child's hungry," I said.

"No, it cries all the time," Alma said indifferently. *It*?

I took up a diaper and changed the baby. I placed it on the bed again and it resumed its crying. "When are you leaving?" I asked.

"Couple of weeks I guess. Grandpa has sold his farm."

I stayed a few more minutes, then left. I said nothing at home, knowing it would only cause anger.

I knew it was no good going again. I would not know what to do, what to say. Certainly no word or action of mine could influence either family. But in another week they would be gone; this was my last chance to see the baby.

I could sense the house was vacant even from the yard, but I checked every room—they were all swept clean, empty of all signs of living. I wandered out back past the tree swing, past the willow with green lace fronds, and came upon the battered tin washtub with remnants of moving-day discards.

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Idly I poked the debris with a stick—a scrap from a dress of Alma's, bits and pieces of other clothing, and a bundle wrapped thickly in newspaper. There was enough white showing outside the newspaper to identify a baby's dress and a pile of diapers. Why would anyone throw away perfectly usable things? Suddenly I had to leave, but halfway to the gate I ran back and using the stick, smoothed the newspaper around the bundle as best I could.

We did not enter the "war to end all wars" until the next April, but Boy became the town's hero when he enlisted shortly after Christmas. Father's pride was overweening.

It was three months later that the letter with the baby picture came. It was postcard size and the baby—as all babies did then—wore a dress and buttoned shoes. The baby had a cleft chin and curls. The note said only, "You can see I was not lying."

Father stared at the picture and crumpled the note angrily. He took the picture to the stove but could not put it in the fire. He threw it on the floor. Mother picked it up later and put it face down on the mantel. Father pretended not to notice it but I saw him once take it up and look at it before replacing it face down.

The picture haunted me. Was that baby alive after all? Had my dark imaginings been girlish fancies? That picture stayed on my mind until suddenly one night I rose out of bed, crept downstairs, lit a lamp, and got out the photograph album. The picture of Boy at six months was missing!

I searched until I found a duplicate among the loose pictures in a drawer and compared it with Alma's picture. Only her baby's dress was different. Could Alma have altered it, clever as she was? I returned the picture I'd found in the album and replaced the other on the mantel. "From me to you, Alma," I murmured.

It was after Boy was reported missing in action that father aged as much as he ever did in the next fifteen years before his death. It was then that he grew preoccupied with Alma's picture. He became obsessed with finding the baby. "I'll adopt him. I'll pay her money and she'll give him up. I'll make her let me have that boy!"

Though he looked for many years, searched the town where the letter was postmarked, advertised in papers, hired detectives, spent all kinds of money, he never found mother or child—if there was a child. I did not even tell him Alma's baby was a girl. He didn't deserve to know.

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a *NEW* detective story by

JAMES POWELL

We have said it before, but it's worth saying again: James Powell is a master of delicious detail, an artist at producing 'tec tidbits and gourmet chuckles. How can you resist a Ganelon detective story about a man with six noses—not roses, noses!

POCKETFUL OF NOSES

by JAMES POWELL

At the turn of the century, before the Protocols of London outlawed espionage activity in San Sebastiano, there existed in that principality a modest district of not more than half a dozen narrow winding streets famous as the spy mecca of Europe. Bounded by the rue Marc-Anton Prattmann, the railway freight yards, the rue Poucette, and the slant of the Marius Aqueduct, the Quadrilateral (as the district came to be known) boasted shops catering to every need of that ingenious, argus-eyed breed, from button-hole cameras, fatal fountain pens, knockout drops, and clothes of the most inconspicuous color and cut to shoes with hollow heels.

Today nothing remains of all this except the shop with the blank sign and the bare window, the place of business of the maker of the finest invisible ink ever concocted. But in the Quadrilateral's heyday, when spies at work, on vacation, or between situations flocked there, the sidewalks buzzed with foreign tongues, the cafés rang with songs of other fatherlands, and the restaurants smelled of spicy elsewheres. No safer streets existed in the Principality than those of the Quadrilateral. In fact, a murder within those precincts was so rare as to be a matter not for the police but for San Sebastiano's Intelligence Service.

On a moonless October night in 1901 a monocled and titled ex-

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hussar officer now in the pay of the Danes and a professional seductress fresh from the Balkans were strolling around the district's perimeter when they heard a short cry of pain and fleeing footsteps in the darkness on the other side of the aqueduct. Exchanging glances, the strollers turned back in search of the policeman they had passed only moments before. Had they waited they would have seen the prostrate figure of a man with the hilt of a knife protruding from his back crawl out of a dark street and into the half light of one of the ancient archways. Face down and grunting with effort, the man worked his way across the cobbles and up onto the sidewalk beneath a street light, a tortured journey that brought his death less than a minute later to the attention of the Intelligence Service.

Ambrose Ganelon, the second to bear that name, did not care for Nino Briquet's opera *The Revolt of the Gondoliers,* and since his wife and young son were away on a visit to the Tower of London, he had given his box to friends. They were delighted when he arrived unexpectedly and smiling, took a seat behind them. A handsome man with the erect carriage befitting a former officer in the Tripoline Lancers, Ganelon wore evening dress well, while the white gloves covered the acid stains which work in the laboratory left on his large hands.

When the house lights dimmed and the orchestra struck up the overture, Ganelon immediately turned his opera glasses to the dress stalls below where a slightly goggle-eyed man with a trim black mustache and a head of airedale ringlets sat at the side of one of the Principality's most striking ballerinas. The world hailed this man, Duhamel Fong of the French Academy, as its greatest authority on hypnotism. Ganelon knew him as the archmalefactor of the West and Europe's most sinister spymaster.

Though the Ganelons and the Fongs were old rivals, it had been years since the mad, high-pitched sound of Fong laughter had been heard in the streets of San Sebastiano. Fong had arrived yesterday. Thanks to the statute of limitations and some fancy legal footwork, no valid warrants were outstanding against him in the Principality. He was free to walk the streets, appear in public, and snap his fingers in Ganelon's face. Yet the detective wondered if Fong's visit might not have some other purpose, something to do with the theft last week of the plans for the new Austrian naval range finder. Both the Russians and the Japanese were prepared to pay handsomely for the device. Ganelon hoped it did. He would be pleased to give

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Fong a taste of prison. To this end he decided to keep a personal eye on the man.

A hand touched Ganelon's shoulder. Police Inspector Marleau's upright silhouette filled the doorway. Ganelon joined Marleau in the small retiring room behind the box where a gaslight burned. Beneath a photograph of Prince Feinhart inscribed to Ganelon and decorated with two crossed blue and pink bicolors stood a gilt table and two gilt chairs upholstered in crimson Utrecht velvet.

Ganelon sat down on one and offered the other to the policeman. But Marleau declined. A sad-faced individual whose black alpaca suits, high stiff collars, and dark narrow ties contributed to his nickname, "The Archbishop," the police inspector was formal to the point of stiffness and in fact did not seem to bend in all the usual places.

"My people just rang me up, sir," he announced in his hushed cathedral voice. "The body of a murdered man has been found in the Quadrilateral."

Ganelon gave a nod of mild interest. In addition to operating the famous detective agency his father had founded, Ganelon headed the Principality's Intelligence Service. There were those who said he *was* the Intelligence Service.

Marleau cleared his throat before continuing. "My people tell me that contrary to standing orders they proceeded with the case as if it was a police matter and moved the body to the Morgue." As if to forestall a display of indignation the policeman added quickly, "May I observe on their behalf that they could be said to have followed the spirit of the order." He scowled disapprovingly at the word "spirit." "Though most certainly not the letter."

"And how was that?" asked Ganelon.

"The attack on the victim did not occur in the Quadrilateral. The man had to crawl a good hundred feet to die there."

Ganelon's interest evaporated. "My dear fellow," he said, "you were quite right. I should have been consulted. But since it doesn't seem to be an Intelligence matter, why, no harm's done." But this remark didn't have the palliative effect Ganelon hoped for.

"Did I mention what they said about the pocketful of noses?" ventured Marleau hopefully. "Don't you find it intriguing that the man was carrying five artificial noses?"

"I most certainly do," said Ganelon calmly, getting to his feet. "I'll follow your investigation with great interest."

Marleau thought for a moment before saying, "It occurred to me,

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sir; that perhaps the man crawled into the Quadrilateral deliberately, to bring you into the case."

"A very clear supposition," lied Ganelon who found the idea a romantic and highly unlikely one. But at least he now understood Marleau's problem. In rebuking his men for moving the body he had no doubt hit upon this fanciful explanation to show why they should have obeyed the letter of the law. Now if Ganelon chose not to investigate, Marleau would lose face with his men.

Early in his career Ganelon decided he could never compete with his father in the area of armchair ratiocination or black insociability. Instead, he turned to the crime laboratory and to heighten the contrast, worked hard to make himself a gentleman in Cardinal Newman's sense of the word: one who never inflicts pain. So there was nothing else he could do. A brief appearance at the Morgue was required to set Marleau right with his men. Fong wasn't going anywhere for a few acts.

Achmed, Ganelon's Berber chauffeur, must have seen the police inspector arrive for he stood at the bottom of the Grand Staircase with his master's coat, silk hat, and cane, and had brought the robin's-egg blue Voltigeur electric landaulette around to the front of the Opera.

"The dead man's name was Dagrutin," said Marleau as they stepped up into the vehicle and Achmed closed the door behind them. "A Serbian. His passport was stamped at the railroad station this morning which probably means he arrived on the Occident Express."

The Voltigeur glided off, Ganelon with his cane between his knees and a hand ready to tip his hat to anyone he knew, while Marleau sat upright, proud to be seen with the great detective.

When they reached the Morgue they quickly discovered the case involved six artificial noses instead of five. Like the others, the one the corpse wore was made of hollow India rubber and attached to the inside of the nasal cavity with a patented toggle. This nose was white where the others were various fleshy shades. Ganelon turned the nose over, admiring the workmanship and noting the name "Newnose" incised on the inner edge. Then out of respect for the dead he replaced the nose on the corpse.

The dead man had been in his late thirties. His thick black hair was pomaded, his closely shaven cheeks smelled of cologne and his mouth of wintergreen. His fingers were manicured. His chest bore an old circular scar with the puckering associated with broken bottles twisted in wounds. Perhaps the man received that mark in the

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same fight that had cost him his nose. Ganelon pulled the sheet up over the corpse's face.

He and Marleau returned to the basket containing Dagrutin's personal effects. In addition to the noses there was a suit and shirt made in Vienna, Serbian silk underwear and socks, Italian pointed shoes, two diamond rings, and a gold pinkie ring. ("He was quite a dandy, our Dagrutin," observed Marleau with disapproval.) There was also a tin of wintergreen breath pastilles, a room key from the Hotel Sebastopol, and a billfold containing several hundred francs.

"It certainly wasn't robbery," insisted Marleau so loudly that Ganelon knew one of the Inspector's men had returned from the corridor where he'd gone for a smoke.

"I couldn't agree more," answered Ganelon in a stage voice. He picked up the key from the basket and rattled it. He still had no reason to believe the case involved Intelligence. But the Hotel Sebastopol was on his way back to the Opera.

Dagrutin's room revealed very little until Ganelon discovered a smallish cardboard box and a sheet of crumpled wrapping paper in the waste basket by the washstand. The paper was addressed in long hand to Dagrutin care of Poste Restante, San Sebastiano. The stamps were Italian, the postmark Genoa. A rubber stamp declared the box had been opened for customs inspection. "My dear Marleau," said Ganelon, handing the box and paper to the police inspector, "it appears you've been right all along."

Marleau, who had grown downcast, brightened. He puzzled over the box and the paper. Then he threw up his arms helplessly. "I'm afraid I don't follow you. The man received a box. All we know about the contents is that they were harmless enough to pass customs inspection. There's no return address. We don't even know who sent it."

"Compare Dagrutin's name on the paper with the signature on his passport," said Ganelon.

Marleau did as he was told. "It's the same!" he exclaimed. "The man mailed the box to himself."

"From Genoa yesterday according to the postmark," said Ganelon. "Now why mail a small something ahead when you could bring it in your baggage? It could well be an Intelligence matter. To put the question in a more interesting way: why is it all right for the customs people at the post office to see the contents of the box and not those at the railroad station? Let's go downstairs to the desk. I have a

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phone call to make and so do you. I'd like two of your best men to pick up a bit of surveillance for me at the Opera."

Within the hour the Voltigeur pulled up in front of the San Sebastiano railroad station sending a galvanic quiver from flank to flank down the line of horses at the hack carriage stand, a telegraph of the shape of things to come. A young man with an intelligent forehead was waiting for Ganelon and Marleau in the customs office. When he had introduced the police inspector, Ganelon said, "Sorry to bring you back to work at this hour. I hoped you might remember this man. We believe he arrived this morning on the Occident Express."

The customs man looked at the passport photo. "We searched everyone getting off the Occident Express," he said. "I searched this one personally. An apprehensive sort and in something of a hurry. We watch out for that."

"I'd like to know if he was carrying five artificial noses."

The customs man shook his head. "No. I'd have remembered that. Even though they'd be duty free."

Ganelon thought for a moment. Then he added, "You searched everyone. What was that all about?"

"A telegram said a passenger named Adler would be carrying contraband in a secret compartment in his suitcase."

"Adler?" demanded Ganelon. "Victor Adler? Tall with red hair and a squint?" Victor Adler was an enterprising freelance spy who had made his reputation several years ago by stealing the specifications for the British Submersible.

The customs man nodded. "We went through his things with a fine-tooth comb and turned up nothing." Ganelon wasn't surprised. Since the time Adler was apprehended carrying a copy of the official report on the French summer maneuvers of 1893, he'd been careful to pass whatever he stole to an accomplice.

"So we searched everyone else as well," said the customs man. "That's standard procedure. Smugglers have been known to use anonymous tips like that telegram to get us looking one way while they slip something past us another."

Nothing more could be done that night. Out on the railroad-station steps Ganelon asked Marleau where he could drop him. The policeman chose home. As the Voltigeur sped silently through the dark streets Marleau said, "I'd be less than frank if I didn't admit I'm up a tree on all this."

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"You're being modest," insisted Ganelon.

The police inspector pursed his lips thoughtfully. "All right," he said, "we've got a dead man with a pocketful of noses. But when he went through customs earlier today he didn't have them. From this I conclude they were in the box he mailed to himself from Genoa yesterday."

"Very good," said Ganelon.

Marleau turned stiffly to look Ganelon in the eye with wonderment. "But why?" he demanded.

"Dagrutin was carrying something very important across the border hidden inside the artificial nose he was wearing," said Ganelon. "He knew if he was searched the other noses would give away his hiding place. So he mailed the extra noses ahead."

"And was that 'something very important' what he was killed for?"

"No doubt," said Ganelon.

"And this fellow Adler was involved?"

"His being on the train could have been a coincidence," admitted Ganelon. "On the other hand if I had to make a list of people I thought capable of stealing the plans for the Austrian naval range finder, Adler's name would most certainly be on it. Let's meet tomorrow morning at the Central Post Office and see if we can't clear up some of the loose ends."

When Marleau arrived at the post office the next morning he was greeted by Achmed and the landaulette at the curb and Ganelon emerging from the building.

"According to the man at the customs counter, Dagrutin's box contained six used artificial noses and nothing else," said the detective. "The man insisted he gave each nose a careful inspection."

"Where does that leave us?" asked Marleau, adding, "Oh, by the by, after the opera my people followed Fong to the ballerina's apartment where he spent the night. He didn't get back to his hotel until two hours ago. He's still under surveillance. Now what?"

Ganelon led the policeman over to the newspaper kiosk beside the post-office entrance. The Principality customarily granted kiosk licenses to army widows. Ganelon had found it informative to secure certain kiosks for women with active minds and powers of observation. Madam Albert was one of these. Her husband, who had served under Ganelon in the Lancers, had died in the charge at Lejah in the shadow of Mount Lebanon.

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Ganelon passed Dagrutin's photo through the woman's small window. "By any chance did you notice this man yesterday morning about ten o'clock, Madam?"

"I recall him quite well," said the woman. "He was carrying a suitcase and was in something of a hurry. On his way inside he asked if I had the day's *Echo de Beaulieu*. But the turf sheets hadn't come yet. They arrived in the next five minutes and I was outside untying the bundle when the other man, the tallish carrot-top, pulled up in a cab across the street. Then the first fellow came out of the post office and bought his paper. He opened it to the personal column and hurried down the steps reading all the way. At the curb he hailed a cab. He'd barely driven off when the other fellow sprinted over and said, 'Give me one of what that man got.' Then he dashed back to his cab which drove off in the same direction as the first."

As they headed for the Voltigeur, Marleau said, "Well, now at least we know where Adler picked up Dagrutin's trail."

"Ah, we know much more than that," said Ganelon, following the police inspector into the vehicle. "We know that Adler and Dagrutin were working together. Adler was too familiar with Dagrutin's ways for that to be otherwise." Ganelon spoke to Achmed in Arabic and the Voltigeur started on its way. The detective continued, "As you said, he picked up Dagrutin's trail at the post office. But he didn't follow him there. That meant he knew where Dagrutin was going. In other words, he knew about the noses and the business of mailing them ahead."

Ganelon offered his cigarette case to the policeman and when Marleau declined, he lit up a Royal Beauty. "Imagine something along these lines and the story won't be too far wrong," he said. "Adler steals the plans and immediately passes them on to Dagrutin. Adler is well-known to the Austrian authorities, after all, while Dagrutin is—what?—an obscure ex-bartender whose only asset was a nose he lost in a street fight. In any event, Adler knows there's a fortune at stake and doesn't intend to take any risks.

"Their destination is San Sebastiano where he has arranged to meet the buyer. He and Dagrutin travel separately on the same train by leisurely stages from Vienna down into Italy. Dagrutin's job is to carry the plans past any customs on the way inside a rubber nose, mailing the others ahead for the reason I've explained. But Dagrutin plans to double-cross Adler and has been in contact with the same buyer on his own account.

"Dagrutin is the one who sends the telegram from Genoa, hoping

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to delay Adler at customs long enough to drop out of sight. But because he and all the others are searched as well, he doesn't get the head start he counted on. Adler picks up his trail at the post office. He kills Dagrutin at his convenience and recovers the plans." Ganelon tossed his cigarette away. "And that brings us to the question of the missing nose."

"It seems to me six is a surplus," said Marleau.

"There are six at the Morgue," observed Ganelon. "And he mailed himself six. But that meant he had to be wearing a seventh when he went through customs at the railroad station."

Here the Voltigeur stopped before a shop with a large red ear hanging over the door and artificial arms and legs arranged neatly in the window. Ganelon dispatched Achmed to the offices of the *Echo de Beaulieu*. Then he and Marleau went inside the shop. Glass eyes arranged by color in apothecary jars stared at them from the counter as they entered. Manufactured ears seemed to cock themselves in wall display cases on either side. Peglegs of every shape and design stood up straight in umbrella stands along both walls.

A small well-kept man in a frockcoat appeared silently in a doorway behind the counter. His polite smile of greeting turned to sadness as he looked them up and down. Ganelon knew the man had dismantled them limb by appendage, rebuilt them entirely with his own wares, and was imagining how much better they would look. "How may I help you gentlemen?" asked the shopkeeper.

Delighted that someone in the Principality did not recognize him, Ganelon chose to keep himself in the background. "My friend Police Inspector Marleau here would like some information on artificial noses," he said. "Newnose, to be precise."

"An excellent choice, sir," said the man, addressing Marleau gravely. " 'Newnose is good nose,' sir," he added, turning to a drawer behind him. "That's their slogan. But why judge them by that? It's a fine product. We sell them singly"—without turning back to them he set a single nose on the counter—"or in sets."

"Inspector Marleau would like to know if they are sets of seven."

The man turned and placed a narrow box of seven noses ranging from white to purple on the counter. "Precisely," he said, smiling at Marleau's cleverness. "Solving the dilemma of the changeable complexion. The patented attachment available only with the Newnose product enables a gentleman to switch noses quickly if he feels himself about to turn white with terror or pink with embarrassment, et cetera, et cetera."

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Ganelon surveyed the set for the one missing from Dagrutin's collection. "He'd like to know about the purplish one," said the detective.

"The nose of conviviality, sir," explained the shopkeeper, looking Marleau straight in the eye. "All work and no play is said to make Jack a dull boy."

"The Inspector has a final question," said Ganelon. "These noses aren't quite the shape of the ones he is inquiring about."

"These are the Mediterranian model," said the man.

"And could you tell him, is there a Serbian?"

"I would have to order it for the Inspector."

"Thank you. Perhaps he'll get back to you on that," said Ganelon, leading Marleau toward the door.

"Thank you, gentlemen. I trust I may be of service to you in the future," said the man in a voice that was sincerity itself.

Outside on the street Ganelon said, "You carried that off admirably, old man. Now, if I were you I'd send my men around to all the bars and other dens of conviviality on the far side of the Aqueduct and see if anyone remembers Dagrutin. If luck's running with you, someone might even remember Adler lurking in the background. That would make your case against him."

Just then Achmed arrived in the electric with a copy of yesterday's *Echo de Beaulieu*. Ganelon opened the paper to the personal column and read. After a moment he said, "Ah, this looks like it. 'Nostradamus: the Mask Market tomorrow morning at 11:00. You'll know where to stand,' " Ganelon looked at Marleau. " 'Nostradamus'—a cruel code name for Dagrutin. I think I know who came up with it."

The annual wholesale Mask Market took place six months before each Mediterranian carnival season in the remains of the old Roman arena. Retailers flocked from Nice, Cannes, and Menton to see what the master mask and carnival paraphernalia makers of San Sebastiano had invented for the new season. Stalls covered the entire ground where the Seven Hundred and Seventy-Seven Christian Martyrs of San Sebastiano had met the lions and tigers from the menagerie of the animal-loving proconsul, P. Cornelius Lucullus.

Every kind of carnival ware and gaudy paper goods from masks and dominos to Japanese lanterns, colored streamers, and confetti were on display. The fine day had drawn a large number of visitors and the masks magnified the scene. The arena's many ancient gates and the gaps in the walls made it an ideal place for a meeting.

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Ganelon stood in the first row of stone seats, holding a banana purchased from a fruit seller. Looking down on the scene, he quickly found Adler standing in front of the booth specializing in nose masks with glasses, eyebrows, and mustaches attached. 'You will know where to stand.' Yes, he was a very cruel man, was Duhamel Fong.

Adler, arms crossed, displayed the nose between the thumb and forefinger of one hand. Clearly, he didn't want Fong to have any doubts about who had the plans and who expected the money. As the crowd ebbed and flowed around Adler, Ganelon wondered if his plan would work. He could easily have prevented the exchange by having Adler arrested. But he wanted to catch Fong with the plans in his possession. Keeping his eye on the red-headed man, Ganelon peeled his banana, handed the edible part down to a passing organ-grinder's monkey, and folded the skin so he could hide it in his hand.

At five to eleven Marleau marched up to announce, "My men are in position, sir." Then he added, "And I'm obliged to report that Fong gave us the slip at the hotel a half hour ago. The man watching his suite outsmarted himself. When he saw Fong head for the elevator he stepped in ahead of him. That's sometimes a very effective bit of surveillance business, as you know. But Fong veered away just before the door closed and took the stairs. Our man in the lobby said several people came down the stairs but swears Fong wasn't one of them."

Ganelon knew Fong to be a consummate quick-change artist, a little-known weapon in his arsenal of deceit. By the first turn in the stairs Fong's hair would be straight and white or hidden beneath a skin cap of baldness. By the second turning his nose would be retroussé or puttied into a hawk's beak. By the third, wadding from the shoulders of his reversible jacket would be stuffed into his cheeks. The man could have crossed the lobby as anyone.

So Fong was already here. No doubt he had spotted Ganelon strolling about up in the seats. No matter. Ganelon was sure Fong would take any risk to pull something off right under his archrival's nose.

As Ganelon and Marleau watched, the traffic of people jammed up in front of the counter where Adler stood. When it cleared away the nose was gone, leaving Adler to stuff an envelope into his inside coat pocket. "Now," said Ganelon.

Marleau blew a whistle and a uniformed policeman appeared in each gateway. If the crowd failed to notice, Ganelon was sure there was one who did. He counted on Fong's confidence in his disguise and in his cool arrogance. The man would not make a break for it.

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He would wait until the suitable moment and then stroll out of the arena like any other visitor. Ganelon knew that right now, down in the crowd somewhere, Fong was watching him, curious to see what he was up to and what he thought a few policemen could accomplish.

Ganelon turned to Marleau. "Follow about ten feet behind me, old man," he ordered. "And keep an eye peeled for a suspicious face in the crowd."

Ganelon strolled with his cane down the empty aisle of stone seats, wondering if Cardinal Newman would ever forgive him for what he was about to do. He opened his hand, and still holding onto the banana peel by the stem, he let it fall to its full length so that anyone watching could see what he was doing. Then he dropped the banana peel on the stones behind him.

Marleau, stiff, erect, and proper with his eyes intent on the crowd, approached the peel step by heavy step. When he reached it, a foot went out from under him and high-kicked up into the air. The man's whole body seemed to be dragged up after it and hung in the air for a fraction of a second.

Then Marleau fell to the ancient stones with a thud that jarred his bones from head to heel. Fifty yards away at a stall selling skull masks and skeleton costumes an old clerical gentleman threw his head back and laughed that hideous, piercing laugh that Ganelon knew so well.

Vaulting down to the floor of the arena, Ganelon dashed between the tables of merchandise toward the laughing masterspy. Fong saw him coming, turned pale, and ducked into the crowd, heading in the direction of the far wall. Ganelon fought his way through the crowd with hardly an apology, using his height to keep the top of the archvillain's head in sight. When they broke into the open, Ganelon was a stride closer to the breach in the wall that was Fong's destination.

He blocked the man's escape as four policemen converged on them. Fong's eyes bulged with rage from behind his clerical disguise. He cursed and flung the artificial nose down on the ground at Ganelon's feet. It took one of those crazy bounces that India rubber noses take, making Ganelon lunge far to his right to pin the thing to the ground with his cane.

In that instant Fong slipped by him and disappeared through the opening in the wall. Ganelon knew there was no point in pursuit. By the time anyone reached the street, Fong could be a hundred different persons. But they would meet again. . .

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"Not at all, sir," said Marleau who was sitting up on a stone bench, nursing his distressed head. "It was an excellent ruse to make the man reveal himself. Don't worry about me. When it comes to hard knocks, being proved right is the best ointment."

" 'Proved right,' Marleau?" asked the detective.

"My original deduction, sir," said the police inspector. "About Dagrutin crawling into the Quadrilateral to get you involved in the case."

"Ah, yes. Of course," said Ganelon, as he turned to watch Adler being hustled out to the waiting police van. By way of amends to Marleau, Ganelon did not mention his own conviction that the noseless Dagrutin, vain to the last and feeling his life ebb away, had crawled into the Quadrilateral in search of a street light where he could select the white nose from among the others and dress himself for death.

"Q"

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a *NEW* short story by

PATRICIA MOYES

Major Arthur Grimmett and his wife Louise of Little Hartney were a strange couple—one might almost call them eccentrics. The villagers didn't understand the Grimmetts. And their house, Pear Tree Cottage, as the Major remodeled it for his wife—well, the improvements certainly were odd, to say the least . . . In her recent short stories Patricia Moyes has been mining a new vein of venality . . .

A WHISPERING IN THE REEDS

by PATRICIA MOYES

They were an odd couple, the Grimmetts. That was the considered opinion of the village of Little Hartney in the county of Dorset in southwest England. Mind you, the villagers considered all outsiders to be odd—outsiders being those who had not been born and bred in the village, or lived there for at least twenty-five years. But in this case the opinion of the village was shared by such comparative newcomers as the Crompton-Bassetts, who had retired to Little Hartney from London a mere five years ago, and the New Vicar, who had replaced the Old Vicar on the latter's death eight years earlier.

Major (ret'd) Arthur Grimmett and his wife Louise had bought and moved into Pear Tree Cottage the previous year. Pear Tree was really more than a cottage, although it retained its ancient name. It was a pretty if heterogeneous house standing about a mile outside the village, not far from the railway station. The core of it—now the large living room and hallway—was all that remained of the Elizabethan cottage for which it was named. Successive generations of owners had added to it, both upward and outward, in a variety of

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styles ranging from Georgian to Victorian, and coming up to date in the nineteen-thirties with the ugly red-brick garage. It was a private house in every sense of the word, its garden secret behind thick yew hedges, and its big, solid wooden gates opening only for the admittance or egress of the occupants. For the Grimmetts took conspicuously little interest in the life of Little Hartney.

The Major himself was a type which Little Hartney recognized and would have been prepared to tolerate—patently ex-Army, with ramrod bearing and a bristly gray mustache. He must have been very good-looking as a young man, the village ladies told each other. Still was—in a mature way, if you know what I mean, dear. Surely he had taken an early retirement—not near sixty if you ask me. Comfortably off, though. You couldn't run Pear Tree Cottage on nothing a year, and none of the local tradespeople had any complaints about overdue bills.

No, the only thing wrong with the Major was his meanness. Miserly, some people might call it. Over such little things, too. Charlie Burbridge, who worked on and off at Pear Tree as gardener and general handyman, reported with some bitterness that the Major kept a felt pen and marked the level of every bottle of drink in his bar cupboard, and even the levels of the sugar, flour, and tea in the transparent kitchen containers, not to mention using a dipstick to check on the petrol in his station wagon; and if he owed you nine pound, nine pence and a halfpenny for work done, nine pound, nine pence and a halfpenny was what you got—never nine pound, ten pence.

The English, of course, are used to eccentrics and tend to regard them with a sort of pride rather than censure. Moreover, although nobody knew any details, there were rumors of a tragedy surrounding the death of the Major's first wife. This automatically turned him into a romantic figure, even if he did check the level on the sugar jar and count the After Dinner mints every evening before the box was put away. This last tidbit came from Mrs. Masters, who had come in to cook and wash up for one of the very few dinner parties given by the Grimmetts—a return of hospitality to the Crompton-Bassetts and the Vicar and his lady.

No, the Major would have been tolerated, and even, in time, liked—but his wife was really too much for Little Hartney to take. Louise Grimmett stood out in Little Hartney like an orchid in a vase of daisies. Worse, she hated and despised the village and its people, and made no secret of it. She spent a lot of her time in London, and

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the village was united in its opinion that it would be a good thing if she went there and stayed there, for good.

To add a final straw, she was not even what the British still call "a lady." Her voice showed neither the soft burr of the West Country nor the universal brisk bray of the aristocracy. It was the voice of a big-city suburb—that distressingly ugly accent which is favored by talk-show hosts on television, proving them to be neither upper-class nor regionally oriented. Unlike in the case of the Major, who clearly came from the top-drawer of society, eccentricity in such a person as Louise was absolutely unacceptable.

The one thing that nobody could deny was that Louise Grimmett was beautiful. A good twenty years younger than her husband, she had the figure of a fashion model, a fine face with sharp yet delicate cheekbones, and a classically pointed jawline. Her honey-blonde hair was natural—never a trace of darkness at the roots, and with the silky sheen that even the most expensive bleaches destroy. If she wore too much makeup—and the village considered that she did—it was concentrated on her eyes and mouth. Her smooth, lightly tanned complexion had no need of any artificial assistance. On the occasions—and they were rare—when Major and Mrs. Grimmett appeared in public together, they certainly made a handsome couple.

Louise Grimmett found many things to complain about concerning the village of Little Hartney, quite apart from its insufferable dullness. For one thing, Pear Tree Cottage was uncomfortable in the extreme. Accustomed to central heating, she discovered that log fires—picturesque though they might be—succeeded merely in toasting one's front, while ice formed on one's back. She found the plumbing woefully inadequate—four bedrooms and only one bathroom—and in winter she complained continually of drafts.

To make things worse, Little Hartney's electricity supply was notoriously unreliable, so that even the electric radiators which Louise had installed frequently ceased to function, generally when a heavy snowstorm struck an electricity line, or lightning struck a pylon—in other words, in the worst possible weather. And so, to the scandal of the village, she had forced the Major to install a private petrol-driven electric generator which could be brought into operation when the power failed.

The good people of Little Hartney knew that places like hospitals and supermarkets with cold-storage compartments and suchlike places had generators—well, stands to reason, you couldn't have the power going off in the middle of an operation, or have a lot of frozen

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food spoiling, but just for a private house with two people . . . "*Well*" said the ladies of Little Hartney, with the special inflection which belies the meaning of the word. The dictionary definition of "well" used as an interjection is "expressing surprise." But it was not surprise which was here expressed—it was outrage.

Major Grimmett did what he could to accommodate Louise's tastes. He had an extra bathroom put in for her especial use. It was not entirely satisfactory, for it had to be on the ground floor, where the old butler's pantry used to be—there was no way of putting it upstairs without sacrificing a bedroom. However, Louise furnished it with a sunken pink oval bath and a handbasin in the shape of a fluted pink shell, with golden dolphins for taps and pink-tinted mirror everywhere.

The bathroom became her favorite room in the house, and the Major—to his secret relief—was banished to the austerity of the plain white-tiled bathroom upstairs. Louise also insisted on mounting an electric heater on the wall above the bath, and this really distressed Arthur Grimmett. He constantly told Louise that it was extremely dangerous, and could lead to electrocution and death, if there should happen to be an accident. Louise laughed at him, as usual.

Naturally, a favorite topic of conversation in the village was why these two unlikely characters had decided to marry in the first place, and why, having done so, they should have picked as their home a village such as Little Hartney, which they obviously disliked. Theories ranging from the sinister to the ridiculous were put forward, over mugs of beer and cups of coffee, but none of them got anywhere near to the truth, which was surprisingly simple.

It has been remarked that Louise had the figure of a fashion model and the voice of a suburban housewife. The astute reader will have come to the obvious conclusion. Louise was born the daughter of a plumber in a south London suburb (which may have accounted for her obsession with bathrooms), and she had left that suburb to make a career as a fashion model.

As soon as it became clear that her extraordinary good looks and photogenic qualities were going to insure her success as a photographic model, Louise moved permanently to London, where she shared a small apartment in a fashionable area with another girl in the same profession. Such girls, with their outstanding beauty, have many social opportunities, and it was not many months before Louise was introduced at a party to Reginald, 4th Earl of South-

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water, whose country mansion lay about ten miles from Little Hartney.

It took Reggie Southwater only a very short time to come to the conclusion that Louise was exactly what he needed as an antidote to his beaky, sharp-tongued, aristocratic Countess, and their brood of grown and growing children. His heir, Lord Benstead, had recently married and produced an heir of his own—since when he had become intolerably pompous and imbued with a grisly reverence for The Family; Susannah, Reggie's eldest daughter, was entirely preoccupied with the horses to which she bore so close a facial resemblance; Timothy was up at Oxford and already being spoken of as a future right-wing politician; while the youngest, Sarah, was captain of hockey at her expensive boarding school. What a boring lot they were, Reggie sometimes thought to himself.

Yet he, too, could not quite escape his sense of responsibility as head of the family. He remembered maxims about not fouling one's own nest—and, in any case, if his affair with Louise should become a public scandal, the thought of being lectured on morals by his own eldest son was more than he could contemplate. The answer to his problem was complex, but at least the first step was clear. Louise must be made—outwardly at least—respectable. That meant marriage, and to a decent, well-bred chap at that. It was then that he met his old friend Arthur Grimmett.

Reggie Southwater was a few years older than Arthur, and they had served as officers in the same regiment during the Second World War—Arthur Grimmett being a professional career soldier, and Reggie (then Lord Benstead, for his father was still alive) merely a war-time volunteer. The two had become friends during the grueling campaign in Europe following the invasion of Normandy. Both had survived, and Reggie had acted as best man when, a few years after the war, Arthur Grimmett had married a plain but very wealthy girl named Teresa Duckworth, an orphan, and sole hieress to the considerable sum for which her father had sold his chain of shoe stores to a large conglomerate shortly before his death.

Then Reggie's father died, and as the new Earl of Southwater, Reggie had to spend more and more time on the family estates in Dorset. The Grimmetts settled in Camberley, where Arthur's regiment was stationed. Inevitably the two men drifted apart. Arthur and Teresa Grimmett did, however, attend the wedding of Lord Southwater to his new Countess, herself the daughter of an Earl. Reggie prided himself on not forgetting his old friends.

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It was about fifteen years after the Southwater wedding that the scandal—if that is not too strong a word—involving the death of the first Mrs. Grimmett hit the newspapers. Arthur had been away from home for the night, staying with friends, and had come back the next day to find Teresa dead in her bath—electrocuted by an electric heater which had somehow worked loose from its mounting on the wall and fallen into the tub.

On the face of it, a most unfortunate accident, no more. But of course there had to be an inquest, of course the newspapers reported that Major Grimmett stood to inherit a considerable fortune, and medical evidence showed that Teresa must have died on the evening that Arthur left home, rather than in the morning before he arrived back.

The Grimmetts' maid—a pretty girl who had a score to settle with Arthur, because she had flirted with him and been rebuffed—gave evidence in a shy, honeyed voice that Madam *never* took a bath in the evening, only in the morning, except perhaps if she and the Major were going to an important dinner party.

The friends with whom Arthur stayed the night were forced to admit, unwillingly, that the invitation had not come from them. Arthur had telephoned them the previous day, asking if he might spend the night there, as Teresa was going to be out late with friends, and might bring them home at all hours.

An expert electrician gave evidence that the heater had been badly mounted—"an 'orrible job" was his actual expression—and might have given way and fallen into the bath at any time. There was nothing to suggest that it had been deliberately tampered with—but then, it wouldn't 'ave needed much, would it?

The Coroner's Jury, which was not composed of the greatest intellects in the land, returned a verdict of "Murder by Person or Persons Unknown," and the police were more or less forced to arrest Arthur.

Once again the facts were simple. Unlikely as it may seem, Teresa Grimmett had, if not a lover, at least an admirer—an ex-boyfriend from her own cheerful, ambitious, Midlands-business milieu, whom she had rejected while under the spell of Major Arthur Grimmett, who was an Officer and a Gentleman and could address at least one Lord by his Christian name. In fact, Arthur came from an impoverished if genteel family, who had sacrificed all they had to send him to Sandhurst Military Academy to become an officer in the

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Regular Army, which was a career for a gentleman. Apart from Teresa's money, all he had was his pay.

Now, Teresa was a good-natured creature, and although she controlled the purse strings, she never abused her position. On this one sentimental occasion, however (her admirer was visiting Camberley in an attempt to interest the British Army in his new type of portable field latrine), she had set her heart on entertaining him alone. Consequently she had asked Arthur, very nicely, if he would mind spending the night elsewhere. Her expected guest was the reason for her admittedly unusual evening bath.

Teresa was already dead when her admirer had attempted to telephone (getting no reply, naturally) to explain that he would have to cancel the date, owing to an unexpectedly fruitful contact in Portsmouth which gave him the hope that the Navy might order the latrines. After several tries he had come to the conclusion that Teresa was a little flibbertigibbett who probably had been planning to stand him up, anyway. Only the next day did he read of her death in a short newspaper paragraph.

Arthur was tried for the murder of his wife and acquitted for lack of evidence. Teresa's boyfriend never came forward. He was happily married and had no wish to stir up trouble. He told himself—truthfully, one hopes—that had Arthur been found guilty, he would have made a clean breast of it and told the whole story, for what it was worth. Arthur's acquittal, however, seemed to let the boyfriend off the hook, and his life resumed its usual calm path.

Not so Arthur's. He announced his intention of resigning his commission, in the interests of The Regiment. Reggie Southwater, who had stood gallantly by his old friend in his hour of need, was one of the people who tried to persuade Arthur that no such drastic action was necessary—after all, he had been acquitted, hadn't he? But Arthur was an Officer and a Gentleman, and there is no arguing with such people. The Regiment had in some way been tainted, and Arthur felt it his duty to resign. He added that he would probably Go Abroad—which to an Officer and a Gentleman means to Hell.

On reflection, however, Reggie Southwater wondered if Arthur's decision might not have been the right one, after all. He was obviously never going to be a success in the army. Admittedly, he had been a mere Second Lieutenant, the youngest regular officer in the regiment, during the Second World War; but by now, had he shown initiative and a talent for leadership, he should surely have been a Colonel, if not a Brigadier-General. No, Arthur was one of those

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military men who got promoted by inevitable steps to the rank of Major at the age of about forty, and remain there until retirement. Meanwhile, with Teresa's money, Arthur could be free to leave the army and enjoy life. Reggie Southwater decided that his old friend had done the best thing, and thought no more about him.

No more, that is, until years later, shortly after he had embarked on his affair with Louise. The meeting of Reggie and Arthur was quite by chance, in a London pub. Arthur, shabbily well-dressed, was clearly down on his luck. After a few beers the truth came out.

Arthur, a man of his word, had gone abroad after resigning from the army. There he had run through his late wife's money with impressive speed, helped on by a host of shady characters who must have marked him down as easy prey. It was the old story—gambling, phony investments, glittering promises of untold riches if only he would put down a few paltry thousands in cash right now. And so it was that Arthur Grimmett was back in London, with nothing to live on but a pension which was greatly reduced by his early retirement, and which was being steadily eroded by inflation. In his early fifties, with nothing but a truncated army career behind him, he was finding it impossible to get a job. By the sixth beer he was as near to sobbing on Reggie's shoulder as an Officer and a Gentleman can ever be.

Reggie had patted him on the back, taken his address, and promised to see what he could do for his old friend. And that evening the plan was born.

Reggie invited Arthur Grimmett to his London house, alone, and made his proposal with considerable tact. Omitting the frills, what it boiled down to was this: Arthur should marry Louise—a marriage in name only, that was to be strictly understood. Reggie would provide money to buy a suitable country house—it turned out to be Pear Tree Cottage—within a reasonable distance of Southwater Manor. Reggie would also settle a considerable sum of money on Louise—the couple would be able to live comfortably on the income, and the capital sum would be for Louise to dip into if she wished, and finally to dispose of as she thought fit in her will. No strings, in fact.

At the same time Reggie proposed to acquire a comfortable apartment in a neighboring large town—one in a building big enough to insure anonymity. Here he and Louise would meet and make their home, during those visits to outlying parts of the Southwater Estate which he was constantly having to make. After all, the Southwater

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property extended into four counties, with segments in several big cities, and fortunately Reggie had always taken the administration of the estate very seriously. His wife and family would find nothing remarkable in his frequent absences from home, to which they were well accustomed.

For her part, Louise would account for her absences by saying that she was going to London. Actually, Reggie confided to Arthur, he never intended to visit London with Louise. He was altogether too well-known a figure, and she would be sure to insist on going to theaters and restaurants. Somebody would spot them, and a scandal would start. Well, what about it, old man?

To Arthur it sounded like a dream come true. He accepted with alacrity. Louise took a little more persuasion. She loved London, enjoyed her work, and had no desire to bury herself in some one-horse country village. On the other hand, the money was undoubtedly enticing, and the career of a fashion model does not last forever. What is more, she would have an unassailable social position, and she quite took to Arthur when she finally consented to meet him. She first saw Pear Tree Cottage on a balmy afternoon in early summer, when none of its inconveniences and all of its charms were in evidence. The engagement was announced in *The Times*, the wedding took place quietly at a Registrar's Office, and the Grimmetts moved to Little Hartney and their new life.

Reggie Southwater thought of everything—or almost everything. He told his formidable Countess that an old friend of his from wartime days, Major Arthur Grimmett, now retired, had moved to Little Hartney with his wife—"You may remember them, darling, they were at our wedding." He suggested that it would be civil to call on them, and invite them to Southwater Manor.

Neither visit was a spectacular success. Lady Southwater admired the improvements to Pear Tree Cottage, suppressing a shudder of well-bred horror at the pink bathroom, while Arthur proudly showed off the new generator to Reggie. The generator was, in fact, quite easy to operate, but Arthur made a big thing about being the only person who was capable of managing it. Even Charlie Burbridge wasn't allowed to as much as touch it. "See here, Reggie, you push this switch to engage the battery, and then . . ." Reggie Southwater suppressed a yawn and glanced covertly at his watch, calculating how soon they could decently take their departure.

At Southwater Manor, Louise tried to find complimentary things to say about the rows of painted Southwaters in the portrait gal-

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lery—"Ooh, that's a pretty dress. Funny the way they did their hair then, wasn't it?"—and Arthur surveyed an array of fat pigs and dairy cows with the indifference of a townsman who considers that bacon comes from the supermarket in cellophane packages and milk in easy-pour containers. Nevertheless, a respectable social connection had been established, so that if Reggie and Louise were seen together, it could be passed off as a chance meeting of friends.

All would have gone smoothly had it not been for the one factor which Reggie had not considered—and which he really should have taken into his calculations, at least as a possibility. Arthur Grimmett, that apparently emotionless Officer and Gentleman, fell hopelessly in love with Louise. It should be explained that, before this happened, Arthur had shown no signs of the miserliness which caused so much comment in Little Hartney. He was now, however, under a considerable strain, and since he had (as he now persuaded himself) been cheated out of the enjoyment of his most precious possession, his wife, he was determined that he would not be cheated in any other way. And so he began marking the whisky bottle and counting the After Dinner mints.

To the reader with, as it were, a bird's-eye view of the whole situation, everything now becomes reasonable and understandable. Arthur's meanness, Louise's frequent trips away from home, the fact that the couple remained in Little Hartney despite their obvious dislike of the place, and—most of all—Arthur's paranoid fear of the electric heater in Louise's bathroom. The whole matter of Teresa's death had long since been forgotten, and both Reggie and Arthur had decided that it would be foolish to mention it to Louise—or, in fact, to anybody else. The vague rumors in the village had originated with a formidable old lady known as Granny Perkins, who was eighty-six and prided herself on never forgetting a name. Her computer-like memory had come up with something to do with a Major Arthur Grimmett and the sad death of his wife. No more. But for Little Hartney it was enough to start a whispering in the reeds.

Events then moved slowly but with inevitability to their climax. Louise, bored with Little Hartney, bored with the anonymous apartment, yearning for London and a spot of life, began to grow increasingly dissatisfied with the attentions of the Earl of Southwater. Little by little she also grew fonder of Arthur. She realized that he was infatuated with her and would do anything for her. One day she suggested that they might spend a weekend in London together. Reggie, she explained, was away on holiday in Sardinia with his

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family. Arthur could do with a break, and so could she. Why didn't they book a suite at the Savoy or somewhere and see that new musical show?

They did, and after the show they went to a nightclub, where they danced and had a fair amount to drink. Naturally they ended up in bed together. And why not? They were man and wife, after all.

When Reggie got back from Sardinia, he immediately telephoned Louise, and—employing their usual code—requested the services of a temporary secretary to help him with his estate business on the following weekend. Louise replied, coolly, that she was sorry, it would not be convenient. The secretarial bureau had nobody available for those dates.

Furious, Reggie stormed out of Southwater Manor (where the code was maintained in case a member of the family should be listening in) and re-telephoned Pear Tree Cottage from a public call box.

"What d'you mean, not convenient?" he shouted.

"Me and Arthur," said Louise disdainfully, "happen to be spending that weekend in Paris. I might be able to fit you in the week after."

It was during the Paris weekend that Louise told Arthur that she had finally made her will, leaving everything to him. "That'll teach old Pie-face," she added, this being one of her politer nicknames for the Earl.

By her own standards Louise was an honest girl. She did indeed meet Reggie Southwater in the anonymous apartment the following week, in order to inform him that the arrangement between them was now at an end.

"It was just one of those things," she said. She loved to talk in clichés. "Fun while it lasted, and no harm done, eh?"

"No harm done?" Lord Southwater could not believe his ears. "I've given you a house, a husband, a social position—*and* a lot of money."

"And you've had your money's worth, love," said Louise practically. "Anyhow, what's the money to you? I daresay it all went down against income tax as Estate Expenses."

The fact that this was true did nothing to improve his Lordship's temper. In a rage he accused Louise of being unfaithful to him.

"With my own husband? That's a turn-up for the book, if you like," she retorted. Then, being essentially a kind girl, she patted his cheek. "Cheer up, Reggie. You'll find somebody else. A change is as good as a rest, you know."

Louise took the whole thing in her stride, but Arthur was frankly terrified. He knew Reggie as a vindictive man perfectly capable of

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violence, and he was sure that it was against him that the full blast of Southwater's wrath would be unleashed. He had just one hold over Reggie. He could expose the latter's liaison with Louise. Or could he? Yes, there must be people who would recognize them as the couple in the anonymous apartment. Of course, it would put him, Arthur, in a ridiculous light, but anything was better than—than what? Arthur could only envisage physical violence, which was bad enough in itself; but the Southwater family might be capable of anything.

Arthur never answered the telephone these days if he could help it, but one early summer evening it rang just at the time when Louise was always basking in the pink tub with the golden dolphin taps.

"Ah, my old friend Arthur, how are you?"

Arthur could not believe his ears. There was no mistaking Reggie's voice, but the latter appeared to be imitating a cooing dove. Was it possible that Louise had broken off the affair without mentioning—? Anything was possible. Of course, with the break between Reggie and Louise, there came the question of money. Arthur had no desire to go back to living on his pension. Then he pulled himself together. The house and the money had been an outright gift to Louise, and she had assured him that she would never leave him and that she had made a will in his favor.

Quite jauntily he replied, "Hello there, Reggie, old chap. Anything I can do for you?"

"I'd appreciate a word with you, old man." Southwater sounded positively embarrassed. "Alone, if you understand me. I think you may be able to help me."

Arthur's heart rose. Good old Louise. Reggie obviously suspected another lover and was trying to enlist Arthur's help.

"Of course, Reggie. I quite understand. When would suit you? I know you're a busy man."

"Let's see." There was a pause, as though Reggie were consulting his engagement book. "How about—no, that's no good, there's a meeting of tenants . . . Thursday seems to be the best day. Thursday of next week. Okay?"

"Certainly. Where shall we meet?"

"Oh, here at the Manor, if that's all right with you. Cecily will be somewhere around, but I'll explain that this is a private conference. About three in the afternoon?"

"Suits me splendidly, old man."

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"Well then—oh, just a moment. Blast it. Got to see my stockbroker then, and you know how these fellows run on. Could you make it a bit later? Around six thirty, say?"

"Of course. Be delighted."

"No need to bring your car, with petrol at the price it is. You're close to the station, aren't you?"

"A couple of minutes' walk."

"Then—do you know the train times?"

"Twenty past every hour, from London," Arthur replied promptly. He and Louise had been using the railway to and from London quite a bit lately.

"Capital. Southwater Halt is the next station from you. Catch the six twenty, and I'll have the car there to meet you—oh, damn it, Cecily will be using it. Has a bridge party starting at six. Get a cab from the station, will you, old man? Always lots of them there, waiting for the London train."

So it was with no more than a sense of intrigued anticipation that Arthur kissed Louise goodbye on Thursday evening as she went off to her regular before-dinner soak in the pink bath, then caught the 6:20 to Southwater Halt. From there he took a taxi to the Manor, where he was met by the butler, deferent but firm.

"Good evening, Major Grimmett. Please step this way, into the drawing room. Whom did you wish to see? His Lordship? Oh, I am very sorry, sir. His Lordship is out."

"But he made a definite appointment over the telephone—"

The butler smiled, understanding and sad. "I fear his Lordship is sometimes a little careless as regards his engagements, sir," he said. "His secretary is on holiday this week, and there have been several unfortunate misunderstandings. If you will accompany me to the library, sir, we can consult his Lordship's agenda together."

On the leather-topped desk was a large diary, with a page for each day, and a line for each hour from 7:00 a.m. to twelve midnight. For Thursday afternoon the page was blank. For Friday, it read—3:00 p.m. stockbroker. 6:30 p.m. Arthur Grimmett."

"You see, sir?" said the butler, who seemed to have experienced life and all its tragedies. "His Lordship entered your appointment on the wrong day. I do not doubt that he mentioned Thursday on the telephone, but in fact he wrote it down for Friday."

Arthur said, "He told me he couldn't send the car, because Lady Cecily had a bridge party at six."

The butler opened a similar book, which had *Lady Southwater*

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inscribed in gold letters on the outside. "You see the entry, sir? Friday. 6 p.m. Bridge with Lady Peterson. Order car and chauffeur for 5:45." The butler sighed. "I am really very sorry, sir, that you had a wasted journey. But you see how it is."

"But Lord Southwater has no engagements entered for this evening," Arthur protested. "Where is he? Why can't I see him?"

"He is out, sir." The butler unbent a little. "He found himself at a loose end and asked me to connect him on the telephone with his friends, Sir Rupert and Lady Forster, who live some five miles away—somewhat although not exactly in your direction, sir. I know that he had been planning a visit there for some time, and he confided in me that he proposed to walk over to see them." The butler unbent still further, recognizing in Arthur an Officer and a Gentleman, before whom even butlers may become almost human.

"Unlike yourself, sir," the butler went on, "his Lordship has to watch his weight these days, and his doctor has prescribed a low-calorie diet and at least five miles of brisk walking each day. His Lordship finds this regime easier to observe if his walk has a definite aim, if you understand me. So, when not otherwise engaged, he often makes a call on foot to friends who live at an appropriate distance. He left the house shortly after five thirty, sir. I fancy Sir Rupert will drive him home for dinner at eight. I would not expect to see him sooner."

Disgruntled, Arthur consulted his watch, and said, "What's the time of the next train back to Little Hartney?"

"The seven forty-five, sir. Many of his Lordship's guests take it back to London."

Those the old duck hasn't invited to stay to dinner, was Arthur's thought, but he kept it to himself. Aloud, he said, "Well, bring me a whisky and soda, there's a good fellow, and then call me a cab. I'll be off home on the famous seven forty-five."

Pear Tree Cottage looked inviting in the summer gloaming as Arthur walked back up the garden path soon after eight. Except—there was something wrong. It took no more than a split second to realize what it was. No lights were burning in the house. One of these damn power failures, thought Arthur, and poor little Louise doesn't know how to work the generator. He quickened his pace and was running by the time he reached the front door.

He found Louise in the sunken pink bath, together with the electric heater from the wall, and just as dead as Teresa had been under similar circumstances. The catastrophe, from a purely technical

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point of view, had blown the fuse of all the wall outlets but had left the ceiling lights unaffected. Since no light was lit, it was obvious that by the time dusk had fallen Louise Grimmett had had no need of any earthly illumination.

The police were thorough. They started off by treating the whole thing as an accident. Charlie Burbridge assured them that, on Mrs. Grimmett's instructions, he had made absolutely sure only the previous week that the screws holding the heater to the wall were firmly in place. Just before the Grimmetts had left for London, in fact. Mrs. Grimmett, he said, had told him that her husband was afraid the appliance might be dangerous.

On closer inspection, however, Police Sergeant Nichols had noticed that the plugs into which the screws had been inserted into the masonry wall were missing. That meant that the heater had not been properly secured at all, in fact, and might have fallen any time; even a sharp blow struck in the right place from outside the wall could have dislodged the heater and caused it to fall into the bath.

The mills of the British police grind slowly, but—as the poet says—they grind exceeding small. The death of Major Grimmett's first wife and his trial and acquittal on that occasion were unearthed.

So it was another Brides-in-the-Bath case, was it? Funny, though, that having been arrested and tried the first time, he'd pull the same trick again. Still . . . no doubt about it, another wealthy wife, another inheritance. Looks bad for the Major, agreed the senior police officers on the case.

The Major's alibi looked a bit thin, too. Said he'd been over at Southwater Manor, for an appointment with Lord Southwater. Reggie—in his usual vague, confidence-inspiring way—agreed cheerfully that he might easily have made a mistake when talking on the telephone, but that he himself felt sure that he had invited Arthur for Friday, as entered in his engagement book.

Senior policemen, brooding on whether or not to arrest Arthur, pointed out to each other that Mrs. Grimmett was just going to her bath when her husband left the house—and who but he would have known that? He could very easily have removed the screw plugs earlier in the day, lurked outside until he was sure his wife was in the water and the heater on, and then sent it plunging into the bath with a blow from outside the wall, and still made the 6:20 train. The ticket collector at Little Hartney had remarked that Major Grimmett had arrived at the station barely in time to catch the train. Arthur's reply was that it had been such a beautiful evening he had strolled

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from home slowly. All very well, said the senior policemen to each other, but you could hardly call it irrefutable evidence.

It was then that the most curious fact in the whole case suddenly came to light, almost accidentally. The local newspaper published a Letter to the Editor, complaining strongly about the numerous power failures in the area. It was written by Granny Perkins, no other, and along with a lot of abusive comment it remarked, "Folks notice when the power goes off at night, so they get no lights and no telly, and at dinnertime when they be cooking. But what about in the daytime, when many don't notice, especially in summer. What about last Thursday, when we had no power from five till seven in the evening? There was I, trying to do some ironing, and off it go. We pay rates and taxes, not to mention electric bills, and I say we're entitled to better service. Yrs. etc. H. Perkins."

An alert young policeman noticed the letter and reported it to his superiors. A check was made with the electricity company. No doubt about it. During the crucial time for which Arthur Grimmett had no alibi, he could not possibly have murdered his wife, because the electric heater would not have been working. And had the heater fallen into the bathtub during this period, it was really beyond belief that Louise would have continued to bathe unconcernedly with the heater floating in the tub, until such time as the power came on again. What had happened was a mystery, but Arthur Grimmett must be considered to be in the clear.

"Wait a minute," said the alert young constable, who happened to be a cousin of Charlie Burbridge. "The Grimmetts have a generator, don't they? The Major could have switched on his own power to do the job."

Chief Inspector Parkinson visited Arthur, as smooth and sympathetic as face cream. He had heard, he said, that the Grimmetts had found a solution to these dratted power failures which plagued the community. A private generator for the house.

"That's right," said Arthur.

"I was thinking the wife and I might get one," lied the Inspector. "Mind if I take a look at yours?"

"With pleasure, my dear sir. For a moment I was afraid this was another official visit in connection with my wife's tragic death."

Parkinson avoided a direct answer to that one and accompanied Arthur through the garden to the little shed where the generator was housed.

"Runs off regular petrol, does it?" Parkinson asked ingenuously.

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"That's right. This five-gallon jerrycan here. That'll keep her going for about five hours, which is longer than most power failures last, but of course I keep a spare can, just in case."

"Charlie Burbridge was telling me that you're the only person allowed to touch this machine, Major."

"Quite true. Not that it's very complicated, but—delicate mechanism, you know, precise series of operations to be done in the right order—make one mistake, and you can wreck the whole thing."

"I quite understand." The Inspector sounded sympathetic. "Still, we've been lucky recently, haven't we? Very few power failures. Haven't had to use it for a bit, eh?"

Arthur gave the matter some thought. "No," he said. "No, I haven't had her going since I filled up the tank after that failure in April. It's in the winter months that she comes in really handy."

"So you've a full tank now?"

"Naturally."

"Mind if I take a look?"

"Help yourself, old man," said Arthur complacently. It was the last complacent remark he was to make for some time. For the jerrycan was only about half full, mocking Arthur's inevitable felt-pen mark indicating "5 gals. Full." The generator had been run for at least two hours, maybe more, since the April power failure.

Arthur grew nervous and began to bluster; maybe he had run the generator since. He couldn't really remember.

Inspector Parkinson remarked that the whole village knew about Arthur's marked bottles of whisky and the dipstick to check the level of petrol in the car. Was it conceivable, he asked, that Arthur should not also have marked the fuel tank of the generator in the same way, had he really run it for an innocent purpose?

Hopelessly Arthur said, "I've . . . I've not been worrying so much about that sort of thing recently . . ."

"May one ask why, sir?"

"Well, my wife and I—that is, we've been much happier together recently . . . It's hard to explain . . ."

It proved impossible to explain to the jury. The police were able to prove, to Arthur's utter dismay, that the current had been cut off at the mains as he was leaving the house, preparatory to pushing the heater into his wife's bath by a smart blow on the wall outside. He would have had ample opportunity to remove the plastic plugs holding the screws earlier in the day. The unexpected power failure

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had forced him to change his plan slightly by starting up the generator before committing the murder.

He had left the machine running until he returned home from an undoubtedly contrived visit a little over two hours later. By then the current had been restored, and he only had to switch off the generator before calling the police. The jury were even taken on a visit to Pear Tree Cottage, where it was demonstrated to them how the precariously balanced heater could have been dislodged from outside.

The Guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion, and when the jury (who had all sworn solemnly to complete ignorance of Arthur's past) heard about his previous trial for the same crime, they went home with the glow of satisfaction that comes from a job well done.

Lord Southwater's groom was never called to give evidence—why on earth should he have been? Sir Rupert and Lady Forster, who were treated with kid gloves by counsel, agreed that Lord Southwater had arrived at their home soon after six thirty—just the time that it would take a brisk, dieting walker to make the distance from Southwater Manor had he set out, as he said and the butler confirmed, at half-past five. He had stayed for a drink, but refused a lift home, maintaining that another hour's walking in the summer gloaming would do him good. Only the groom could have told the jury that Lord Southwater's favorite chestnut mare had been missing from her stable between half-past five and eight o'clock—and since he knew that Lord Southwater was taking his walk at that time, he could only presume that Lady Susannah had taken the mare out for an evening ride, by no means a rare occurrence.

In fact, with the assistance of the chestnut mare, Reggie Southwater had had plenty of time to visit Pear Tree Cottage, discover to his annoyance that the electricity was off, start the generator (as Arthur had been kind enough to instruct him), dislodge the heater so that it fell into Louise's bath, and ride on to the Forsters, tethering the mare well out of sight of the house and arriving on foot. He knew that Louise always took a bath at six. She had done so in the anonymous apartment, and she had often assured him that she did the same thing at home. On his way back to the Manor he stopped off at Pear Tree Cottage again, this time to disconnect the generator. Then he walked the mare slowly home.

It was Charlie Burbridge who had actually removed the plastic plugs from the screw-holes during the afternoon, in consideration of a down payment of one thousand pounds and an excellently paid

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job for life on the Southwater Estate. He had no compunction in keeping his mouth shut. Not only was the compensation excellent, but he had never forgiven the Major for doing him out of the little nip of Scotch or gin that he considered a man's right, if he was working on some job inside a house.

In the witness box in his own defense, and realizing that any meaningful life was over for him, Arthur forgot that he was an Officer and a Gentleman, and told the whole sordid story of his arranged marriage and the shameful affair between Lord Southwater and Louise—this despite repeated objections from the prosecution. Most people—including the judge and jury—disregarded the unlikely tale as mere spite and the effort of a guilty man to save his own skin. Lady Cecily and Lord Benstead, however, believed every word of it, and while nothing was ever said outside The Family, it may be taken for granted that Reggie Southwater served almost as unpleasant a life sentence as did Arthur Grimmett. And after all, although Reggie never suspected it, Arthur had, in fact, murdered his first wife, Teresa.

Louise's money went to her nearest relative, her widowed plumber father. (Arthur, of course, was not allowed by law to benefit financially from his crime.) Despite his genuine admiration for the pink bathroom, Louise's father was sensitive enough to sell Pear Tree Cottage. He bought himself a nice house in Brighton, where he lived happily for the rest of his life.

So blind Justice balances her scales, and makes fools of the would-be cleverest of us all.

"Q"

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Strictly speaking, this is not a "first story." It is a first mystery. About twenty-five years ago the author, using the pseudonym of Jackson Barrow, wrote some stories for the old sports pulps and "made a couple of science-fiction sales. It's been a long time."

Yes, we admit we stretched our department title this time. Why? Well, the author, Louis Weinstein, is a "sixty-six-year-old retired City of New York dockmaster, having put in twenty-seven years on the New York waterfront," and we believe strongly in encouraging new writing careers. If Mr. Weinstein's story is not strictly within the meaning of our department title, it is surely within the spirit of EQMM's Department of "First Stories" . . .

HOW I BECAME A JEWELER

by LOUIS WEINSTEIN

I became a jeweler by a fluke. My father got a call one night from Harry Lubin, of Lubin and Fein, manufacturing jewelers. Lubin wanted my father to investigate some thievery at the factory. But, bad as he always needed work, my father talked himself out of the job. A mature man pretending to be a skilled jeweler would be pegged as a plant right off, an Alphonse Gumshoe better with his eyes than with his fingers. The situation called for someone young enough to pass for a genuine apprentice.

Lubin got the point right away but bounced back with another idea. Maybe your boy, Lou, he suggested, would like to give it a try. He's a pretty sharp kid and probably has picked up some savvy just from being around the business. A ton of mistakes wouldn't give away a green hand.

Lou knows his way around, my father agreed. Why don't you talk to the boy yourself? If he's interested in your proposition, make your own arrangements.

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That same night I found myself at the big Lubin house in the old neighborhood in Queens. Lubin knew me. His son Marvin, a year or two older than me, had been my friend before we'd moved. I'd been in the Lubin house a few times.

"Look, kid," Lubin, as gruff-voiced as I remembered, began, "Max Rubel, the furrier, recommended your father Phil for my problem. Okay, for Rubel your father did a great job. But for me he'd be as useful as a snowball on a pool table. But you, you'd be perfect, Lou."

"Perfect for what?" I asked. "Would you mind telling me what's the problem?"

"Gold is our problem. We make gold rings, mostly, and gold is disappearing. Not tons. Not pounds. But ounces, enough ounces to give us the hurts."

"Where do I fit in?"

"To sit at the work bench and keep your eyes open," Lubin said. "But first let me explain. My partner and I, we both work at the bench. We have four more jewelers. Three I've known since Roosevelt was President. The other is my nephew. I'd stake my life on them. They're all like family."

"Every family has a black sheep."

"True. But we don't just count on their honesty. They have to account for every ounce, every gram of gold that's handled. I check, my partner checks. The boys get so much weight for every ring, every brooch. The finished piece has to match up close. A little gets lost here and there, but most of it we pick up in the sweeps. We don't handle gold like it was Swiss cheese."

"So you think it's your partner," I said, wondering when was the last time he bought a pound of imported Swiss.

"Exactly. The question is how, not who. That's where you come in. We need a jeweler, and I handle the hiring. Hymie Farber, rest his soul in peace, died a week ago. You think you could handle a burner and file, go through the motions long enough to catch him in the act?"

"You've got a deal." I didn't hesitate. The month was June. I was fresh out of high school, and my father's income being what it was, I needed a job. Any job. There was something else, too. I'd given my father a hand with suggestions from time to time, helped him crack a few cases. I wanted to get my feet wet. My father and I were both interested in seeing how I'd do on my own. "If my father can be a milkman, a furrier, a dog trainer, why can't I be a jeweler?"

"Okay, while you're here, we'll go down to the basement and I'll

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give you some jiffy lessons. You have a social-security number, don't you?"

"Sure," I said. "But make my name Lou Mandelbaum instead of Lou Mandel."

"Why?"

"I'm leery about using my right name."

"You want to be Mandelbaum, be Mandelbaum."

We worked pretty late in the shop I never knew was in the basement. He explained how a ring is made—the casting, soldering, shaping, finishing, polishing. He showed me how to handle the tools, and seemed satisfied about how I caught on. He briefed me on some other things too.

Next morning I got started. First I met Irwin Fein. A small thin guy, sharp-featured, around sixty. Sallow skin. Baggy, nervous eyes. He looked harmless, almost insignificant.

Then the other guys. Benny Muster was big, paunchy, gray-haired, moon-faced. A relaxed type, delighted to have a new pair of ears to talk at. They put me in a middle slot at one of the two four-hole workbenches in the small loft. The loft, in a corner of the building, had windows along two sides. Muster was at my left, Lubin at my right, and next to him Herb Birnbaum, his nephew.

Muster kept up a steady stream of chatter, glancing at me to see if I was picking up on his points. He had a cure, subject to instant change if you disagreed with his opinion, for everything wrong in the world—inflation, pollution, energy, corruption in government, pot, the youth of America. I liked him. Once in a while he interrupted his chatter to pass along a few tips, motioning for me to watch him while he said, "See how I do it, like this. That's how you handle the tweezers. When you've been at this racket as long as me, you pick up a few tricks. Old Benny'll teach you right."

I'd try it his way and he'd nod approval. I've got to admit I wasn't bad. I have good hands.

Pinchus Millstein, a small dry man of sixty plus, wore a skullcap while he worked. He had skin like crumpled paper, soft brown eyes, a wispy gray beard. With his name he should have been a fiddler. Instead, he was an opera freak, maybe a disappointed cantor. Pinchus ate lunch at the bench out of a brown bag, the same menu every day—tuna and onion on a seeded roll, a banana, and cold tea from a glass fruit jar, which he carted back home. All day long he hummed operatic arias in a shaky tenor. Puccini, Rossini, a lot of

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Verdi. Outside of the bel canto, he was pretty quiet—a steady worker who couldn't be rushed.

Herb Birnbaum I took to be in his early thirties. Well built. Dark wavy hair. Good-looking, on the style of John Garfield. A Yankee fan, the betting kind. A good dresser, changing into work clothes instead of using an apron, like the others. Herb was unmarried, liked the night life. From his talk, a lady's man. My impression was, it was mostly talk.

Fat Al Jacobson completed the roster. Two hundred fifty-sixty pounds piled on a five-nine frame. Moody. One day talkative and jovial, next day like a clam. The good days he bragged about his *summa cum laude* daughter, a schoolteacher and his only child. From her picture, a real looker, a tall shapely blonde. At twenty-eight she didn't seem to show much interest in getting married. She shared an apartment with an old high-school girl friend, also a teacher. Maybe what bothered Fat Al most about her and made him so moody was he was afraid she was living in the wrong kind of love nest. And she had expensive tastes, too—Lincoln Continental, designer clothes, cruises—and he could refuse her nothing.

Fat Al earned his poundage honestly. Most days he ate at the bench. Three cream-cheese sandwiches on rolls, followed by a big chunk of pie, all washed down by a sixteen-ounce cola. Bottle, wrappings, and bag all went into the trash can afterward. Sometimes he went out for lunch with Herb, Benny, and me, usually to the delicatessen around the corner.

I clocked Fein's routine. It was pretty regular. At about 9:30 he went to the john. At 10:30, without washing first, he went to his flat-topped desk in the office for five minutes' worth of Danish pastry and coffee. Mornings, till about a quarter to twelve, he worked at the casting table along the far wall. Till lunch he got himself organized at his bench, next to Millstein. Lunch, which he ate in the office, came out of an old-fashioned black metal lunchbox. A sandwich, always non-greasy, cheese or lean meat, wrapped oldstyle in wax paper, plus the thermos and a piece of fruit, usually an apple.

He was very orderly, placing everything just so. On the desk top alongside the food he set down a medium-sized smoky brown medicine bottle, kept handy in case his digestive miseries—ulcer and gall bladder—flared up suddenly. He put the paper, the *Morning Press*—a pass-along from Herb—down flat on the desk and read while he ate. Like clockwork just before one p.m. his wife called. At the first ring he got up to close the door. After lunch he worked at

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the bench. Around 3:30 he ducked into the office for coffee. Four o'clock was trip-to-the-john time. At six he and Lubin checked the stock and left together.

Every night Lubin phoned me. Gold was still disappearing. I was still watching Fein and the others, but hadn't picked up anything definite. That was the gist of our nightly conversation.

If Fein was on my mind, I was on his too. I would catch him pausing in his work to study me. About a week into the job I dawdled past his desk at lunchtime. The *Morning Press*, the open thermos, the open medicine bottle, the apple spread out as usual, his sandwich raised to his mouth.

I caught him staring at me. I noticed how dirty his arms seemed to be. Evidently he didn't bother to wash up before lunch. He dropped his eyes a little, then lowered the sandwich, looked my way, and smiled faintly, saying, "There's something I've been meaning to talk to you about."

"What?"

"How did Harry happen to find out about you?"

I was ready for this.

"His son, Marvin, and I are friends. Marvin told him I was looking for a job."

"What's Marvin doing now?"

"Going to medical school. For the summer, counselor at a camp in the mountains."

"Is he still playing handball? I understand he's a champ."

"Not his sport," I shook my head at the trick question. If there was anything Marvin wasn't, it was a handball champ. "He plays a little golf."

"What line's your father in?"

"A salesman. Shoe ornaments," I answered. "He's on the road a lot."

It wasn't much of a lie. My father had taken a shot at that line and missed, like always.

"So you're a friend of Marvin." He nodded. "That's all. I was just curious."

I'll bet he was curious.

That night I told Lubin.

"Nothing to worry about," he said. "I know Irwin Fein like a pinochle deck. I knew he'd get around to giving you the third degree. First day you came to work he asked me what your pedigree was. He's our man all right."

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Still, I watched them all. No one made any suspicious moves. Pinchus kept crooning Puccini arias. Fat Al looked grimmer by the day. He let it drop his daughter was shopping for a mink coat. Benny solved his quota of world problems and kept telling me how well I was doing. I must say I was giving it the old college try. Even Lubin remarked I had a knack for the work. That made me feel pretty good, until I remembered the case was getting nowhere.

One morning the burner almost slipped through my fingers. I made a couple of wild swipes trying to get a handle on it. Fat Al, at his grumpiest, gave me a nasty look and snapped, "That's a burner, not a meat ax. Finesse. Use a little finesse. The way you handle it, Moishe Pipick off the street could do better."

"Leave him alone," Fein cut in. "No one was klutzier than you when you first started."

"A slip." Benny also came to my defense. "We all goof sometimes."

"Asbestos gloves," Fat Al said. "Let's take up a collection and buy him asbestos gloves."

"Size seven," I smiled at him.

"Ah," he went, and I stopped sweating.

Next day he was in a good mood.

"Forget what I said yesterday, boychik," he told me. "I've got a lot on my mind."

"Sure," I said. "No hard feelings."

But it all left me wondering.

After about three weeks Lubin started to get impatient.

"Well, Lou," he put it to me, "when do we get some action?"

"Don't quit on me yet, Harry," I told him. "Give me a little more time. I think I'm getting onto something."

"Enough time and I'll be filing bankruptcy, and that goniff Fein will be running off to Miami, laughing all the way."

I wasn't as sure as Lubin about Fein. Why should he steal from his own business, maybe put it under, kill the golden goose? In my book Fat Al was still in the running. How much of a financial bind did his daughter's extravagance put him in?

Then Fat Al faded out. His daughter was changing her mind. The mink coat was out. All of a sudden she was getting a serious rush from Mr. Right, a young professor.

That left just Fein. I tailed him home a couple of nights. I watched his apartment building to see if he went anywhere. He didn't. All I got for my trouble were bags under my eyes.

"I could have told you," Lubin remarked about this. "He doesn't

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budge. Not out to dinner, the movies, a walk with his wife. Weekends he sits home. His wife goes out, plays poker. A four-alarm fire in the building might get him off his backside, nothing else."

"Why is he so nervous about someone hearing his phone conversations?" I asked.

"He likes privacy, no one to know his business. He wouldn't want you to know what color Kleenex his wife uses."

"Those calls bother me," I said. "Maybe they're not all from his wife. Could you run a check with the phone company, incoming and outgoing?"

"Sure. But what would it prove?"

"Do it anyhow. If he's stealing, there's got to be a reason. Maybe the phone calls could give us a lead."

By this time a couple of things had caught my attention. I narrowed my concentrated Fein watching to the casting and lunchtime.

We met after work one night and I asked Lubin, "Harry, what's the story on Fein's medicine bottle? It looks like a hand-me-down from Noah's ark. Did you ever see him use it? I mean, take a spoonful or a sip?"

"To tell the truth"—he thought a minute—"I never noticed. Why do you ask?"

"It hits me wrong," I said. "Why has he been nursing that same bottle for so long? If he hardly ever has to use it, why doesn't he just keep it handy in the medicine cabinet? Why put it on the desk every day, and drag it back and forth from home? Another thing: I understand he takes his vacations in Florida. What month?"

"End of December, early part of January. We close the place for three weeks then. He goes to Miami. Does that mean anything?"

"Could be. He spends a lot of time looking over the racing page. Did you know that?"

"Irwin Fein is an oddball. He follows sports a little, racing included. But if he's a horse player, it's the best kept secret since who shot J.R."

"Tropical Park has a year-end meet. Could it be that's the big Florida attraction, where he gets his secret kicks?"

"It would explain a lot." Lubin looked thoughtful. "But the idea takes getting used to."

That same night I jumped up from the dinner table, leaving my folks with their mouths open, and hotfooted it to the library. What I found out started all the other chunks of information bunching together in my mind like starlings congregating for the night's roost.

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Next morning before I left for work my father had some interesting news. He'd spotted a private detective nosing around the neighborhood, a guy he knew named Chuck Brannigan. My father did some sleuthing. Brannigan, undoubtedly working for Fein, was inquiring about me. It wouldn't take much savvy for Brannigan to figure out that Lou Mandelbaum and Lou Mandel wore the same socks at the same time, and that Phil Mandel and Lou Mandel were father and son. Fein was closing in on me. I had to beat him to the finish line.

Now ninety per cent onto his method, I hung around at lunch, giving it a final check. Fein didn't tidy himself up. Little hunks of amber-colored wax hung onto the skin and hair of his right arm, most heavily on the underside between his wrist and his elbow. The left arm was clean as a chicken bone worked over by ants. Through eating, he crossed his arms in front of him so that his left hand lay beneath the underside of his right arm, just above the wrist. He sat that way, going through the paper from back to front. I sensed he was waiting for me to leave before his next move, so I headed out into the hall. In a few seconds I returned, slipping past him nonchalantly and mumbling something about forgetting my matches.

I saw enough. He had shifted the position of his hands. His left hand was poised over the medicine bottle, and his thumb and index finger were pressed together, mashing a lump of wax. It was the easiest thing in the world to drop the wax and whatever happened to be stuck to it—little scraps of gold, for instance—into the bottle. He had it down to a science. It was all part of the same natural-seeming movement he used to reach out for the bottle with his left hand. Casual. Neat.

Later that afternoon Lubin got a phone call and left the office for about a half hour. When he returned, as he sat down he whispered in my ear, "Meet me around the corner after work."

When we met, he said, "Lou, you smelled something. I saw my man at the phone company. Every day Fein talks to a bookie on the west side, Lenny Siegel. Not one call to his wife. She calls him maybe twice a week. The rest of the calls are from Siegel. The days she calls, when he gets done talking to her, he calls Siegel. That's why he makes sure to close the door. Another interesting thing: Siegel lives in his building."

"That's the clincher," I said. "Right in the building is where he settles with the bookie. But we don't have much time." I explained about Brannigan. "In a day or two at most Fein will know I'm Phil Mandel's son and will crawl back in his shell."

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"So what do you suggest?"

"I know his gimmick," I said. "Tomorrow we'll let him spill his own beans."

I outlined my plan. Maybe not great, Lubin agreed, but worth a try.

Next morning Lubin called the delicatessen. At twelve sharp a delivery boy hustled around with a big bag, which Lubin took at the front door and lugged to his desk, right next to Fein's.

Benny, on his way out to lunch, asked me, "How about a corned beef down to the deli?"

"I'll take a raincheck," I said. "Harry's already got me a sandwich. We're eating in. He wants to talk to me."

"No problem?" Benny gave me a funny look. "Jeez, I hope not."

Bless his heart, he was worried about me getting canned.

"Don't know yet," I shrugged. "I'll soon find out."

Lubin sat down. I pulled up a chair next to him, close to Fein's desk. Out of the bag Lubin dragged two mountain-high hot corned-beef sandwiches and all the trimmings.

Fein looked our way and asked, "What's the big occasion?"

"No big occasion," Lubin said. "I wanted to talk to Lou about his work. But let's eat first."

We all started to eat. Lubin and I ate slowly, so Fein would finish first. I could almost hear the wheels turning in Fein's head. If he judged there was no risk, he'd do his daily thing. If not, he'd skip a day. My guess was he didn't think I could see him well enough for him to change his routine.

Fein was leafing through the main news section of the paper, and I was almost finished with my sandwich when Lubin swallowed a bite of pickle, put his sandwich down, and said, "Lou, sorry to have to break it to you, but I'll give it to you straight. I've got to let you go. As a jeweler, you make a good plumber. Your eyes wander all over the place. You're slow. We can't afford a kolyika, a cripple. Finish up the day but don't come back tomorrow."

"What the hell is all this?" I slammed my sandwich down, managing to catch a side glimpse of Fein. "If I'm such a washout, why'd you wait so long to tell me?"

Fein's jaw fell. He looked startled, then secretly pleased. But he wiped that expression off his face and chimed in with, "Don't be so hasty, Harry. Let's talk it over. We've had worse. He needs the job."

"What are we, a charity organization?" Lubin shouted. "You stick

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to your end of the business. I hire, I fire. I know when a guy can't hack it."

I doubled over and grabbed at my gut, putting on an agony act. I gasped and moaned and staggered in Fein's direction.

"Let me have the medicine," I groaned, grabbing at the open bottle, only feet away. He'd already dumped the wax into it.

I raised the bottle to my lips.

"Don't!" A cry of alarm boiled out of Fein. He jumped to his feet and lunged toward me, reaching for the bottle. "Don't drink that!"

But Lubin moved faster and stepped between us.

"Why not?" He looked straight at Fein, his voice deadly calm. "Tell me why not."

"Because"—Fein looked around, the color gone from his face—"because it's my medicine. It's just for me. It wouldn't be good for him."

"Bull," Lubin said. "Tell that to Siegel, the bookie. We've got you with your pants down, Fein. It's *aqua regia* in that bottle, and that's how you've been getting the gold out of here, a little at a time, dissolved in the acid."

"The party's over," I said.

Fein just stood there, his mouth open, his head bowed.

"Say something," Lubin roared. "Say something, you crook, you conniving skunk, you goniff. You got nothing to say? Then I'll say it. Get your tail out of here, for good. And no phone calls from lawyers or accountants either. Not while I've got this"—he held aloft the bottle he'd taken from my hand.

"Careful," I warned. "Don't wave that stuff around. If that acid dissolves gold, think what it'll do to your skin. It'll burn a hole in you."

Nitric acid and hydrochloric acid, separate, my library visit told me, were nothing to fool with. Mixed together, they would dissolve metals, like gold, that nothing else could touch. All new to me, but old hat to Lubin, and to Fein. They didn't have to understand the chemistry of it any better than I did to know that certain simple chemicals, like sulfur dioxide, added to the solution would precipitate the solid gold. Or, without kitchen-sink muss and fuss, any precious-metal company would be delighted to process the solution for a reputable jeweler and buy the gold.

"Take your choice," Lubin went on. "Get out or get prosecuted."

Fein shucked off his apron, grabbed his jacket, and got while the going was good.

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"I was thinking of the trade." Lubin denied any humanitarian motives for going easy on Fein. "Shenanigans like these give a firm a bad name. Keep this all to yourself, kid. I'll let the word out he suddenly got so sick he had to retire. Lou, what was it tipped you off?"

"No one thing. A lot of little things added up. Gold wasn't getting out in solid form, so it had to be some other way. Fein's fascination with the racing page. His vacations during the Tropical Park season. His phone calls, early enough to get his bets in. Then that beat-up medicine bottle. If I'd known about *aqua regia* right away, we'd have broken the case in a day or two. Then there was that one dirty arm. Fein didn't think anyone was smart enough to catch on . . . Well, I guess this wraps it up here. Shall I finish out the day?"

"What's the matter?" Lubin asked. "You sound unhappy. Don't you want to leave?"

"Glad you asked," I said. "I kind of like it here. Good steady work, pay not bad, good people to work with—that's a pretty hard combination to beat."

"So stay," Lubin said. "You're getting to be a pretty good mechanic. Tomorrow we'll start you on the casting."

That's how I became a jeweler.

So next time you get engaged or married, or just want something extra nice in the way of jewelry for an extra-special occasion, stop in at Harry Lubin, manufacturing jeweler. Fine quality, good price, satisfaction guaranteed.

NEXT ISSUE

11 ***NEW*** stories—including

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Nick Velvet)

PATRICIA MOYES (about a matter of succession)

ISAAC ASIMOV (about the Black Widowers)

PATRICIA McGERR (about a sense of humor)

GEORGE BAXT (about a writer's block)

and a special reprint by CORNELL WOOLRICH

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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME BEAT

by R. E. PORTER

PICTORIAL CLUES: What does Charles Felix's *The Notting Hill Mystery* (1862) have in common with Ed McBain's *Heat* (1981)? According to Julian Symons (in *Critical Observations,* just published by Ticknor & Fields), Felix's book was the first mystery to include diagrams of the crime scene and other pictorial clues. It was a practice repeated by Conan Doyle in some Sherlock Holmes stories, and it became commonplace in the classic mysteries of the 1920s and 1930s, reaching its zenith in Dennis Wheatley's "Crime Dossier" books.

No Philo Vance novel seemed complete without a diagram of the murder scene or a sketch showing how a door could be locked with tweezers. Agatha Christie diagrammed her suspects' locations in country houses *(The Mysterious Affair at Styles),* on trains *(Murder on the Orient Express),* boats *(Death on the Nile),* and planes *(Death in the Clouds).* All the early Ellery Queen novels had diagrams, and Queen used pictorial clues as late as *The Finishing Stroke, The Player on the Other Side,* and *Face to Face.* Dell Books actually created maps for its popular "mapback" reprints during the 1940s, sometimes envisioning scenes the authors never imagined.

Today Ed McBain's 87th Precinct series is probably the prime practitioner of the pictorial clue, using room diagrams *(Like Love),* photographs *(Doll, Jigsaw,* and *Let's Hear It for the Deaf Man),* handwriting samples *(Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!* and *Heat),* and other clues to enhance the books. And that's the answer to our opening question. Both *Heat* and that long-ago Charles Felix novel reproduce handwriting samples in the course of the mystery.

TRUE-CRIME CLASSICS: Published some time ago but just brought to our attention is a nine-volume series of true-crime classics reprinted in hard covers. Included are two anthologies, *The Arts of Cheating, Swindling and Murder* (1925) and *Great Unsolved Crimes* (1938), plus John Dickson Carr's *The Murder of Sir Edmund Godfrey* (1936), Henry Brodribb Irving's *Studies of French Criminals of the Nineteenth Century* (1901) and *A Book of Remarkable Criminals* (1918), Victor McClure's *She Stands Accused* (1935), Frederic Herbert Maugham's *The Tich-*

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borne Case (1936), William Roughead's *Classic Crimes* (1951), and William Stewart Wallace's *Murders and Mysteries* (1931). The books are sold separately or as a set by Hyperion Press, 45 Riverside Avenue, Westport, CT 06880.

ROSS MACDONALD: We may never have an autobiography from Ross Macdonald, but the next best thing is a new collection of his essays, speeches, and book introductions, *Self Portrait: Ceaselessly Into the Past,* with an Introduction by Eudora Welty. The $15.00 book is published by Capra Press (P.O. Box 2068, Santa Barbara, CA 93120), which also offers an $85.00 limited edition signed by Macdonald and Welty.

MYSTERY NEWSLETTERS: A new bimonthly, *Mystery News,* edited by Patricia Shnell, offers mystery reviews, previews of forthcoming books, author interviews, and more. It's $9.95 a year for six issues, from Mystery News, P.O. Box 3750, Sparks, NV 89431.

Another newsletter, *State of Shock,* appears monthly but concentrates on horror and thriller books and films. It's $10.80 a year for twelve issues, from State of Shock, P.O. Box 395, Mattoon, IL 61938.

CRYPTOGRAMS: From Dover Publications comes Norma Gleason's *Cryptograms and Spygrams* ($3.50), over 100 puzzles with helpful aids to solving various types of ciphers.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: This spring will see two new novels from leading British mystery writers. *Twice Shy* by Dick Francis (Putnam) tells of two brothers threatened fourteen years apart by a villain seeking a computer program that accurately predicts the winning horses in major races. And Peter Lovesey's *The False Inspector Dew* (Pantheon) introduces a unique sleuth on an ocean voyage from Southampton to New York during the 1920s.

Graham Green's new novel, *Monsignor Quixote,* about a priest who goes in search of what he perceives to be evil, will be published in May by Bodley Head, London, with the American edition from Simon & Schuster to follow shortly. A chapter from the book, "How Father Quixote Became a Monsignor," appeared in the Christmas 1978 issue of *The Tablet,* a British Catholic weekly.

The quarterly *Chesterton Review* (1437 College Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 0W6) plans a number of special-theme issues. One on "Chesterton and Detective Fiction" will be edited by Joseph A. Quinn of the University of Windsor.

A Dutch company, Loeb Publishers, is said to possess five Judge Dee stories by the late Robert van Gulik which have never been published in English. Let's hope we see them soon.

Among the forthcoming Raven House titles are *Classified Death* by Claire Taschdjian and *One Coffee With* by Margaret Maron.

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BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

Casablanca café owner Humphrey Bogart never said "Play it again, Sam" and Tangier thief Pepe LeMoko (Charles Boyer) never whispered "Come with me to the Casbah," Harry Haun informs us in his entertaining compilation, *The Movie Quote Book* (Lippincott & Crowell). Delving through its pages—featuring some four thousand lines of dialogue from treasured old films—conjures for the mind's ear script high points from some of our favorite mystery movies, and what a delightful parade of impressions that can be!

Some lines—like Joan Fontaine narrating "Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again" in the moody opening to *Rebecca*—need no further word of explanation, immediately conjuring up the entire spirit of Alfred Hitchcock's first American (but very British) triumph. Very often, too, the narration of film noir sets the mood superbly. Mark Stevens, the detective in *The Dark Corner,* moans after his last lead has evaporated: "I feel all dead inside. I'm backed up in a dark corner, and I don't know who's hitting me."

Indeed, detectives in the crime-film golden age were often very quotable. "When a man's partner is killed, he's supposed to do something about it," Bogart as Sam Spade explains the code of the private eye. "It doesn't make any difference what you thought of him. He was your partner, and you're supposed to do something about it." *Not* to would be bad business.

In another scene in *The Maltese Falcon,* Spade's ethics are not so visible, as he explains to a client: "We didn't exactly believe your story, Miss O'Shaughnessy. We believed your two hundred dollars. You paid us more than if you'd been telling us the truth, and enough more to make it all right." *Falcon* is, of course, full of tersely memorable lines, including Spade's final exchange with a killer he reluctantly turns over to the police. "If they hang you, I'll always remember you."

Professional detectives get all the best lines in crime films—the amateurs only get warnings. "Death's at the bottom of everything, Martins. Leave death to the professionals," Trevor Howard admonishes Joseph Cotten in *The Third Man,* trying to stop him from playing amateur detective in postwar Vienna. And Dick Powell as private eye Philip Marlowe in *Murder, My Sweet* observes about a corpse found "in that bag-of-old-clothes position that always means the same thing. He had been killed by an amateur. Or by somebody who wanted it to look like an amateur job. Nobody else would hit a man that many times with a sap."

Sometimes the most memorable lines are the most succinct. "I steal," confesses a driven, furtive Paul Muni at the end of *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang.* "We rob banks," brags Warren Beatty matter-of-factly in *Bonnie and Clyde.* "When I get in a tight spot, I shoot my way out of it. Why, sure! Shoot first and argue af-

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terwards," crows Edward G. Robinson as the trigger-happy *Little Caesar.* Killers can get carried away. "We'll start with a few murders—big man, little man—just to show we make no distinction," plots Claude Rains democratically as *The Invisible Man.* At times, too, murderers announce their plans quite sinisterly—as when famed brain surgeon Paul Lukas comments on the fate of Margaret Lockwood, a fellow passenger on a European train in *The Lady Vanishes:* "She will be removed to the hospital there and operated on. Unfortunately, the operation will not be successful. Oh, I should perhaps have explained. The operation will be performed by me."

Dying words are not neglected. "Mother of Mercy, is this the end of Rico?" gasps Robinson's Little Caesar, and James Cagney, shooting it out atop the oil tank in *White Heat,* shouts: "Made it, Ma! Top of the world!" before toppling. Mischa Auer, just before draining an unsuspected glass of poison, the first island-stranded victim in Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None,* says: "I'm all for crime, Your Honor. May I propose a toast? Here is to crime."

There are other glasses to be hoisted in our favorite crime films. "Here's to plain speaking and clear understanding," says Sydney Greenstreet over a drink before negotiations in *The Maltese Falcon.* "To new worlds of gods and monsters," chortles Ernest Thesiger in the crackling laboratory of *The Bride of Frankenstein.* And, just after we see Ronald Colman disappear into a swirling Himalayan snowstorm, a foreign-office type in *Lost Horizon* salutes: "Here is my hope that Robert Conway will find his Shangri-La. Here is my hope that we all find our Shangri-La."

Good lines? You'll find quite a few of them in *The Movie Quote Book.* Here's looking at you, kid.

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INTERVIEW: JOYCE PORTER

EQMN: The majority of your 18 books to date are about Inspector Dover. Do you have a favorite among your three major characters—Dover, Edmund Brown, and the Honourable Constance Morrison-Burke?

PORTER: My favorite character is usually the one I'm not writing about at the time. Though I owe most to Dover, I think that marginally the Hon. Con is my blue-eyed boy. She is easier to write.

EQMN: You're marvelous at reducing human nature and the settings of your stories to the lowest common denominator.

PORTER: I have little control over how I write. When I started I intended to be a second Simenon, whom I admire beyond words, but it didn't come out that way. I still don't know why.

EQMN: Is it true you didn't begin writing until you were 36?

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PORTER: Yes.

EQMN: What prompted you to start?

PORTER: I got fed up with being pushed around in the Air Force. I thought it would be easier to be a writer than actually work for a living. I was right.

EQMN: You served as a flight officer in the Women's Royal Air Force. Didn't you enjoy it?

PORTER: I was a career officer and loved it until the last couple of years. It was mostly a question of age, I think. Restrictions on my personal freedom which didn't bother me when I was twenty became less acceptable as I grew older. I also wanted to settle down in one place. However, I have no real complaints. I usually had very interesting work, I played a lot of sport, I made marvelous friendships, and I had a lot of fun. Looking back, I think the Air Force gave me much more than it took.

EQMN: You must have affection for the police procedural (Dover), the private-eye story (Morrison-Burke), and the spy story (Brown) in order to spoof them so well. Do you read many thrillers?

PORTER: I grew up in the great age of detective-story writing just before World War II and read them avidly. Nowadays, for obvious reasons, I don't. I'm terrified of being halfway through writing a book and then reading one on the same theme. I make an exception for foreign ones though, especially Emma Lathen. They are so different that it doesn't bother me. Actually, I read very little fiction. I find that television satisfies that particular need. At the moment I seem to be spending all my time reading memoirs and so forth of pre-Revolutionary Russia.

EQMN: In what non-reading activities do you take pleasure?

PORTER: I love foreign travel and would do more of it if I could afford it. I garden, chiefly for the fresh air and exercise, and grow most of my own vegetables. Since I have the space and the time, I would feel it immoral not to. Wonderful soil here too—green sand. Hence my Sand Street address. It must be the peasant in me. I play bridge and wish I were a better amateur bookbinder than I am. I'm good with my hands.

EQMN: How has Inspector Dover managed to rise in the ranks in spite of his, um, inadequacies?

PORTER: Dover has reached the dizzy middle of the police hierarchy, thanks to the well established custom of kicking people upstairs. This is the bane of every large organization and was certainly not unknown in the R.A.F. In my day the simplest way to get rid of a lousy corporal was to let his promotion to sergeant go through and shove him off onto somebody else. Highly irresponsible, but occasionally desperate situations called for desperate remedies and to hell with ethics.

I did once meet a fairly senior police officer who had been in and out of every department in his force with an alacrity that must have brought tears to his eyes. Obviously none of his superiors could wait to get rid of him. He is really the prototype of Dover, who, for the sake of the story, just happens to have got stuck in the C.I.D.

EQMN: Are you working on a book?

PORTER: On the principle that

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every clown wants to play Hamlet, I am now working on a serious biography—of the Grand Duchess Elisabeth Feodorovna of Russia. Which is where the Russian the Air Force taught me comes in handy, though the majority of the stuff published about her is in English, French, or German. She was a granddaughter of Queen Victoria and reputedly one of the most beautiful women of her day. She married a monster—well, almost—who was blown up by revolutionaries in the Kremlin.

She then took to religion in a big way and founded her own convent, of sorts, in Moscow. She was murdered by the Bolsheviks in 1918 and the other day became a saint, of sorts, in the Russian Orthodox Church. I find her quite fascinating—but whether I can interest anybody else in her is a different kettle of fish.

THE JURY BOX

by JON L. BREEN

The past year has seen an unusually high incidence of Russian backgrounds in American suspense fiction. First there was the deservedly bestselling *Gorky Park* by Martin Cruz Smith. Now there are two more—one a large-canvas blockbuster and the other on a much smaller scale. Both are well done, but I think the "little" book will stay with me longer.

*** Anthony Olcott: *Murder at the Red October,* Academy Chicago, 405 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611; $11.95. Hotel security man Vanya Duvakin thinks finding a murdered guest is bad enough. That the victim is apparently an American is more awkward still. With the sure-fire situation of an ordinary person caught up in dangerous matters beyond his control, Olcott's first novel (Edgar committee, take note) presents a vivid if downbeat picture of Moscow life and comes to a particularly powerful and unexpected climax.

*** John Kruse: *Red Omega,* Random House, $14.50. If *Red October* is black-and-white for the art houses, Kruse's book is a technicolor and Cinemascope job. It involves a reluctant Spanish radical sent to assassinate Stalin so that a U.S. mole can take control of the Soviet government. The story is involving throughout, but the suspense really heats up in the final third.

*** Thomas Harris: *Red Dragon,* Putnam, $13.95. Also red but not Russian, this is an inverted detective story in the Lawrence Sanders mode, though giving the principal sleuth psychic powers takes some of the edge off the detection. Extremely graphic and very well written, the tale of the multiple killer the cops call the Tooth Fairy is neither pleasant nor likeable, but it's done with undeniable skill.

*** William Campbell Gault: *The Bad Samaritan,* Raven House, $2.25. Brock (the Rock) Callahan, ex-Los Angeles Ram turned private eye, returns for his first case since 1963,

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winning his creator this department's Comeback-of-the-Year award. Brock is now married, wealthy, and semi-retired, the same situation Raymond Chandler envisioned for Philip Marlowe in his unfinished last novel. One of the most distinctive private-eye writers, Gault owes less to Chandler stylistically than most of his contemporaries, but they have in common the ability to keep you reading even when you lose track of the plot.

*** Brian Garfield: *Checkpoint Charlie,* Mysterious Press, 129 W. 56th St., New York, NY 10019; $10.00. The adventures of unconventional CIA man Charlie Dark are collected in book form for the first time. The dozen tales include ten from *EQMM,* one from *AHMM* ("Joe Cutter's Game," rewritten to involve Charlie), and one brand new—"Charlie's Last Caper," in which Garfield *seems* to end the series, though fans will be thankful he hedges his bets somewhat in the Introduction.

*** Gary Wolf: *Who Censored Roger Rabbit?,* St. Martin's, $10.95. This is a standard private-eye opus except for one thing: it takes place in an alternate universe in which cartoon characters (called "toons" and coming in humanoid and barnyard forms) exist in real life and interact with humans. It's a very original mystery-fantasy, funny and ingenious.

*** Phyllis A. Whitney: *Vermilion,* Doubleday, $12.95. Whitney is expert in all facets of romantic suspense writing, but her strongest point is an unerring feel for locale—in this case, Sedona, Arizona, with a side trip to the eerie ghost town of Jerome, which no unwary traveler can ever forget.

*** William L. DeAndrea: *Killed in the Act,* Doubleday-Crime Club, $12.95. Network troubleshooter Matt Cobb, a surface smart-aleck but deep down a true believer who actually likes commercial TV, looks into crimes connected with his company's fiftieth-anniversary show. There's some real technical ingenuity here, especially in the matter of the fire and the bowling ball, and the characters are well drawn. The book might have been better without the final twist, one of the most overused of Least Suspected Person gimmicks.

*** each to a trio of British series stars in good form: Tim Heald's Simon Bognor, investigating the murder via poisoned bath-oil of a Canadian tycoon in *Murder at Moose Jaw* (Doubleday-Crime Club, $10.95); Jonathan Gash's roguish antique-dealer Lovejoy, attempting the impossible theft of a Chippendale table from the Vatican in the amusingly told and cunningly plotted *The Vatican Rip* (Ticknor & Fields, $10.95); and Ellis Peters' medieval monk Brother Cadfael, spotting a slightly-too-transparent killer in the colorful *St. Peter's Fair* (Morrow, $9.95).

** John Wolfe: *Drilling for Death,* Raven House, $2.25. The Houston-based second adventure of public-relations consultant Johnny McCoy zips right along in a well established groove, despite style and dialogue most notable for their corniness (references to "dastardly" and "foul" deeds and a shot that "rang out"). The author has some of the winning ineptitude that marked such writers as Sidney Porcelain, Alfred Eichler, and Milton M. Raison.

Among the recent reprints are Sara Woods' 1972 novel, *They Love*

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Not Poison (Raven House, $2.25), involving suspicions of witchcraft in 1947 Yorkshire, among the best but least typical of the Antony Maitland series; Colin Watson's 1958 debut, *Coffin Scarcely Used* (Dell, $2.25), a witty Inspector Purbright novel by one of the field's funniest writers; and a genuine curiosity, hard-boiled pioneer Carroll John Daly's *The Snarl of the Beast* (Gregg Press, $13.95), first published in 1927 and now reissued with a new Introduction by learned critic Charles Shibuk. Present-day readers must meet this one halfway, but the view it offers of a sub-genre in embryo is fascinating. The appeal to a mystery connoisseur is similar to that of a very early talking picture to a movie buff.

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"Q"

DETECTIVERSE

MORE GRAVE TONES

by JAMES HOLDING

Jessica James, "The Candy Kid,"
Reclines beneath this granite lid.
Caught stealing chocolates one day,
Jessica tried to run away—
And tried as well, with great good sense,
To swallow the damning evidence.
But eating while running so nonplused her
She choked to death on a peanut cluster.

Hic iacet Pinky ("The Smoker") Frank,
While siphoning gas from a neighbor's tank,
He totaled himself as well as the car
By pausing to light a fresh cigar.

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a *NEW* short story by

HENRY SLESAR

Not at the point of a gun, you understand—a con game is more like it. Both the detective and Mr. Kipness' executive assistant smelled a rat—a rat by the name of Harold Buckhalter . . .

THE CONTESSA COLLECTION

by HENRY SLESAR

I've only hated one man in my life, until I met Harold Buckhalter. From the day he appeared in the office doorway, thrusting his perfect chin out like a probing lance, smiling with what appeared to be eighteen rows of gleaming white teeth, I knew that I wasn't going to like the newest employee of Kipness Gems. I said "like." Hate came later, nurtured slowly by everything Harold Buckhalter said and did during the two months I suffered his insufferable presence, until Walter Shillito, the detective, with his tweed coat and briar pipe, manifested himself and became the instrument of my retribution. But never mind Walter Shillito. Concentrate on what I'm saying about Harold. Listen to the first three things he said to me.

1. "Are you Mr. Kipness' secretary?"

No. I'm his executive assistant. George Wadley.

2. "My name's Harold Buckhalter, George. I guess he told you about me, huh?"

No, he did not.

3. "Well, I guess he wouldn't tell his secretary everything, would he?"

Eighteen rows of teeth flashed like a cheap electric sign, and Harold sailed past my desk and straight through into Mr. Kipness' office. The Four Fates (my private name for the older ladies on the

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staff) giggled and tittered at the performance, which didn't surprise me. What stung, however, was the amused smile on the face of Gretchen Dimes. I thought Gretchen had better taste. She brought small leatherbound books to work. We liked the same authors and composers. Sometimes, we had lunch together. She didn't seem to mind the difference in our ages. Her father had been bald, too.

I waited for Harold Buckhalter to emerge from the office like a leaf blown before the raging wind of Mr. Kipness' temper. But no such thing happened. Instead, Kipness himself emerged with his arm around the young man's well-tailored shoulder, with an avuncular smile on his face that made my stomach borborygmic. In proud tones Mr. Kipness introduced his new manager of sales, and guided him personally to the desk vacated only a week ago by the retiring Mr. Demetrius. A desk uncomfortably close to Gretchen's. A desk which placed him even more uncomfortably in the line of sight behind me. Which led to the next thing Harold Buckhalter said to me.

4. "Would you hold your head still, George? I want to see if my tie is crooked."

Using the back of my naked scalp as an imaginary mirror, he shifted the knot of his tie and grinned at Gretchen, who had the decency to frown and look away. Well, let's be honest. I almost hated Harold Buckhalter the very first day.

To be equally honest, I was hoping fervently that the first weeks of Harold's employment would quickly prove to Mr. Kipness that he had made an error in judgment. Good suits and big smiles did not a salesman make, and even though it was apparent that Harold knew his gems, that was no guarantee of success in the competitive jungle that Mr. Demetrius had trekked for so long. Frankly, I thought the logical successor to Mr. Demetrius was the executive assistant who had been so loyal to Kipness Gems six years. I had said as much to my employer one afternoon, after a three-martini lunch. Mr. Kipness didn't dignify my suggestion with a reply, possibly because I was sick all over his blotter. I am not accustomed to alcohol. A week later Harold made his unwelcome appearance.

Unfortunately, it wasn't unwelcome to our key accounts. Many of our customers seemed to be relieved that old Demetrius was no longer representing Kipness Gems. Demetrius had opted for early senility, and had such poor eyesight that he could barely see a jeweler's loupe. There was a story, perhaps apocryphal, that he had once popped a 4-carat yellow diamond into his mouth, believing it to be a raisin. Harold may not have had Mr. Demetrius' experience,

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but he had 20/20 vision, a dazzling smile, and a way with customers. I hesitate to guess what methods he employed to ingratiate himself, but judging from the size of his expense account, he did more than a little socializing with clients, and always in female company. I shall say no more.

Two weeks after Harold joined the firm, I committed the tactical error of making him the subject of my lunch with Gretchen Dimes. She was strangely silent as I warmed to my topic, and I began to realize that my dislike of Harold (it was still only that) was leading me into expressions of petty jealousy and mean speculation. I was sure that Gretchen thought of me as a tolerant, civilized type, of generous spirit, and that my attack on Harold wasn't worthy of me.

I stopped at once to ask her if she had read the new translation of Proust. She didn't reply, because her eyes were fixed on the young man flashing his teeth at her like a lighthouse signal across the room. It was Harold, of course. The tactical error I had made was choosing a restaurant where we would be together. It was almost as if I knew that the sight of Gretchen and myself in intimate conversation would inspire Harold to new mischief.

It did exactly that. Two mornings later, when Gretchen was twenty minutes late getting to work—and, curiously, so was Harold—the tittering comments of the Four Fates, stage-whispered for my benefit, made it clear that they had seen each other socially the previous evening. During the length of Gretchen's six-month employment I hadn't got up the nerve to ask her out in the evening. Harold accomplished the feat in two weeks.

No, you're wrong; I didn't hate Harold yet. I resented him. I disapproved of him. Perhaps I even envied him. But I wasn't yet lacking in control. I went on the attack. I investigated Harold's background, hoping to find some falsehoods in his résumé. It was easily accessible to me through Mr. Kipness' private file. There was only one reference given, a Mr. Winslow Early, president of the Early Jewelry Company of Providence, Rhode Island. I felt sure that Mr. Kipness, undoubtedly blinded by the light from Harold's teeth, had failed to check these credentials, and with my heart pounding in hope and excitement I placed a call to Providence.

It was somewhat late in the day, and I only managed to reach the company answering service. However, I left a message and received a call from Mr. Early himself the next morning. It was one more bitter disappointment.

"Harold? Best damned salesman in the country."

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"Then why did you let him go?" I asked, depressed.

"Well . . . we had a little trouble here, as a matter of fact. Had a loss that wasn't covered by the insurance company, and we had to cut down on the staff."

"I see," I said, without really seeing at all. Even now, I'm astonished that I failed to ask Mr. Early more questions about that "loss."

There was something else I failed to do. I forgot that the Providence call would appear on the next office telephone bill, and that Mr. Kipness, who knew what every kilowatt of electricity cost and the going price of paper clips, stormed around the office until he found out who was responsible. Naturally, I had to admit the truth and pay for my investigation out of my own pocket. And when Harold learned that I had been checking up on him, it seemed to inspire him to new heights of hate-inspiring actions. Here is what he did.

Monday. Harold handed me my coffee in a container which had been neatly pinholed on the bottom. Coffee leaked slowly over Mr. Kipness' weekly financial letter, which was already printed on brown paper. Harold denied any sabotage, of course.

Tuesday. As I lunched with Gretchen at our favorite health-food restaurant, he interrupted our conversation about the Baroque composers and pulled up a chair. I was so offended I gagged on a bite of carrot stick. In seconds I found myself locked in Harold's grip as he performed a totally unnecessary Heimlich Maneuver on me.

Wednesday. Harold brought me a present. A pocket comb. Not only did the Four Fates giggle, *so did Gretchen.* Gretchen had never giggled before in her life.

Thursday. Somebody—undoubtedly Harold—savaged my filing cabinet, completely aborting my careful system. My entire F file, for instance, was placed under PH.

Friday. It was Mr. Kipness' birthday, and there was an office party. The usual silliness prevailed, but for some reason, it seemed sillier than ever and I began to laugh uncontrollably when I found out that I was unable to recall how one walked. I didn't understand what had happened until the next morning, when I realized that it was Harold who had brought me the fruit punch which was my staple liquid refreshment at these affairs. Harold had spiked it. As if the hangover wasn't bad enough, when my head cleared I remembered saying something to Mr. Kipness at the party about him being an old—. Well, I won't say the word, but it didn't begin with PH.

There was no use denying it any longer. I hated Harold Buckhalter. I hated him with a passion. And when Walter Shillito, all

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tweedy and briary, slid into the booth opposite me at The House of Health, he seemed to sense that I would make a willing ally in his own personal crusade to bring Harold Buckhalter to justice. Only it wasn't moral retribution that Walter Shillito wanted; it was Justice with a capital J—as in Jail.

"Now don't misunderstand, Mr. Wadley," he said in low, warning tones. "I'm not *certain* that Harold Buckhalter is responsible for these gem heists. If I was, I would have been shining my badge in his face instead of yours."

"Gem heists," I said, awestruck, thrilled, and very happy. Never in my wildest dreams had I conceived of any such resolution to my problem.

"Not robbery," Shillito said. "Not at the point of a gun. A con game is more like it. Inside jobs. To me, it's no coincidence that this Harold Buckhalter worked in three companies that sustained large losses of gems. I worked on two of these cases, Mr. Wadley, and I smell a rat."

I asked him why he didn't warn Mr. Kipness himself.

"No good," the detective frowned. "If there's one thing this guy Buckhalter manages to do, it's get himself in with the boss. The boss always *loves* the guy."

Suddenly I remembered Mr. Early. I told Shillito about my call to Providence, and Shillito reacted with excitement. "I didn't even *know* about that one!" he said. "Did he say *why* Buckhalter left?" When I told him about the "loss," Shillito was almost crooning with pleasure, and I realized that there was another reason why he chose not to warn Harold's employers. It had become a personal vendetta. Shillito *wanted* the "heist" to happen!

"Okay," he growled. "It's true. The last time I warned his boss, Harold quit his job. But two weeks later he was working for another gem company. And in six weeks they were reporting the mysterious disappearance of a hundred grand worth of diamonds."

"My God," I said, letting my carrot cutlet grow cold. "And do you think he's going to pull something like that again? At Kipness Gems?"

"I don't know. But I want to know. I want to catch the guy with the meat in his mouth. I want that so bad I can taste it. But I figured I couldn't take a chance of telling Kipness. He's probably thinking of him as son-in-law material already."

"Mr. Kipness doesn't have children."

"Then Buckhalter will be the son he never had. No," Shillito

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sighed. "I had to talk to someone who *wasn't* crazy about Harold Buckhalter, and I thought maybe you might be that person. From what I've heard, the bosses may love Buckhalter, but his fellow employees usually don't."

"But what can I do?"

"You can help me. You can help me catch this guy in the act. I can't do it alone, Mr. Wadley, I need somebody on the inside."

"I see."

"You're Mr. Kipness' executive assistant. Yours is a position of trust, right?"

"That's correct."

"If Harold makes his move, you'll probably be involved, one way or another. Do you see what I mean?"

"Well," I answered casually, "I've been with the firm for six years, and I certainly don't want to see it robbed. I'll be only too glad to help."

"That's what I call being a public-minded citizen, Mr. Wadley."

I didn't argue with him about motives.

"Just tell me what you want me to do."

As it turned out, all I really had to do was wait. According to Walter Shillito, Harold rarely made his move until the boss was out of the office, preferably out of town. That was his M.O., a term we investigators use for a criminal's *modus operandi*. As Mr. Kipness' executive assistant, I knew exactly when that would occur—at the beginning of April, when Mr. Kipness made his yearly buying trip to the Far East.

I looked forward to that date with shivery anticipation, determined to play a key role in the downfall of Hateful Harold. A dozen times a day I fingered the card Walter Shillito gave me, bearing the phone number to call if and when Harold made his move. I was willing to put up with his indignities, with the sight of Harold and Gretchen's blooming office romance, with his insults and schoolboy pranks, knowing that the day of reckoning was at hand.

On April 3rd I had completed all the arrangements for Mr. Kipness' departure, which meant more than simply booking flights and arranging ground transportation. As usual, Mr. Kipness insisted that I be on hand for all the petty details of traveling—closing up his high-rise apartment, handling his luggage, dosing him with air-sick pills; in fact, everything short of carrying him on the flight

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piggyback. It was never a time I enjoyed, but this year there was a difference. Harold.

For the rest of the week I waited impatiently for Harold to make some kind of move, and when nothing occurred I had a new reason for nervousness—the sickening fear that Mr. Shillito's suspicions about Harold were unwarranted; that Shillito was simply a man thwarted by his failure as a detective; perhaps he was even slightly paranoid on the subject of Harold Buckhalter. I could appreciate *that* only too well. And when the end of the week approached, and Harold had gone about business as usual, I knew I would be facing a gloomy weekend despite the forecasts of sunshine.

But on Friday morning Harold approached my desk with what could only be described as a saunter, flapping a pale yellow rectangle of paper. Even before he opened his mouth I sensed that the moment of crisis had arrived.

"Got a cable from Mr. Kipness," he said. "He wants me to show Mr. Rutherford the Contessa Collection. Would you get it out of the vault, Georgie?"

No matter how well prepared I was for Harold's ploy, his words shocked me. The Contessa Collection consisted of thirteen blue-white diamonds, originally part of a necklace that had once adorned the alabaster throat of an Italian contessa who was the mistress of more than one royal personage. Mr. Kipness had had the Collection on consignment for almost two years, since the owner insisted on selling the Collection in its entirety.

"Rutherford?" I said. "Who is Rutherford?"

Harold shoved the cablegram under my nose. I read:

"SHOW CONTESSA COLLECTION ARNOLD RUTHERFORD HOTEL DORSET SOONEST. SENDING WADLEY AUTHORIZATION TODAY."

"I didn't receive any authorization," I said.

"You haven't looked at your mail yet, Georgie," he smirked.

Sure enough, there was a similar cablegram in my mail bin. I read:

"THIS CONSTITUTES AUTHORIZATION GIVE BUCKHALTER CONTESSA COLLECTION FOR SALES CALL. KIPNESS."

The cablegram had been dispatched from Singapore, but all my instincts told me that the scam had been launched. Somehow, Harold had arranged for cables to be sent from Southeast Asia; perhaps it had been as simple as placing an overseas call to the telegraph office, or perhaps a confederate was involved.

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I was aghast at the simplicity, the boldness of the plan. While Mr. Kipness was at the office, no salesman was ever in possession of more than a few thousand dollars' worth of samples; the Contessa Collection was worth almost half a million and the individual stones would be easy to dispose of in the diamond market. Harold Buckhalter could simply walk away from Kipness Gems with a fortune—if I cooperated. But of course I wouldn't do anything of the kind.

I cleared my throat and said, "Uh, this is quite a responsibility, Harold. Perhaps I'd better call Mr. Kipness in Singapore, just to confirm his instructions."

"*Call* him?" Harold said incredulously. "Don't you believe his own cablegram?"

"I didn't say that."

"Look, Georgie, if Kipness wanted to give you the instructions by phone, he would have called himself. Besides, he never spends more than a couple of days in these places; he has all that territory to cover in two weeks. You won't reach him if you try, and he wants me to see this potential buyer *today*."

I tried to think of counterarguments, but my throat was rapidly going dry. Then I knew what my next move should be.

"Very well," I said stiffly. "The Collection is in Mr. Kipness' private vault." I rose to enter the office, and Harold started after me. Somewhat imperiously I told him that I would handle the matter myself. He didn't complain, but flopped into my own chair and wheeled it about to face Gretchen's desk. The last thing I saw before entering Mr. Kipness' office was her blush.

In the office I made a quick dive for the telephone and called Mr. Shillito. I didn't need his card; by now his number was engraved on my brain.

"Mr. Shillito?" I said. "It's just the way you said it would be! Buckhalter wants some diamonds from Mr. Kipness' private vault! There were two cablegrams—"

I was stammering, and Shillito tried to calm me down; but I'm sure his own nerves were tingling. I repeated the story as clearly as I could, and waited on his advice. It was slow in coming, and I began to hyperventilate into the silent receiver.

"Mr. Shillito!" I pleaded. "Please tell me what to do! I can't possibly give him those diamonds. I know it'll be the last we'll see of them!"

"Give them to him," Shillito said.

I gasped as well as I could, with so little oxygen left.

"Do what?"

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"Give them to him," Shillito said. "But not until . . . twenty minutes from now. It'll take me only ten minutes to get to the front of your building; when he comes out, I'll be on his tail."

"No," I said firmly. "I can't do that. I can't possibly release all these valuable diamonds."

"Don't you want to see justice done, Mr. Wadley?"

"Of course I do!"

"Don't you want to see that sonofagun behind bars, where he belongs?" He didn't say sonofagun, but I don't like bad language. "You know you *hate* the guy, don't you? You want him out of your life, don't you?"

The remark was calculated to motivate me, and it succeeded.

"All right," I said soberly. "I'll give him the diamonds. *But*—I'm going with him to meet this 'customer.' I want to see this arrest for myself."

"No good," Shillito said crisply. "You'll just scare him off. We want to catch him redhanded, don't we?"

"That's how it has to be—I go with him," I said firmly.

When I came out of Mr. Kipness' office ten minutes later, the flat steel box under my arm, I told Harold what I was going to do. He looked perturbed, to my satisfaction. But then he grinned without showing any of his glorious teeth, and said, "Okay, George, whatever you say."

He was perfectly at ease as we hailed a taxi at the curb. From the back seat I tried to catch a glimpse of Mr. Shillito's trailing vehicle in the rear-view mirror, but I couldn't see one. Nevertheless, I was sure that the detective was behind us, the briar pipe clenched grimly in his jaws as he contemplated the final confrontation with his archenemy.

I had to admire the cool manner in which Harold stepped into the lobby of the Hotel Dorset; he seemed so confident that for a moment I wondered if the cablegrams had been genuine, and if there *was* a customer waiting in a hotel suite to view the Contessa diamonds. He was just as nonchalant as he went to the house phones, and spoke inaudibly into the receiver. But when he turned to me, exposing teeth in a smile that was less incandescent than usual, I knew I had made no mistake.

"Mr. Rutherford wants me to come up alone," he said. "Hope you don't mind, Georgie."

And with that he neatly plucked the steel box from under my arm and headed for an elevator whose doors were just closing. He had

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timed the move perfectly; there was no way I could stop him. It had been so blatant and unexpected, all I could do was stand on the thick carpet of the Hotel Dorset in frozen outrage, watching the ornate brass doors close on his toothy, triumphant grin.

Helpless to know what to do next, I hurried to the front desk, to ask if, indeed, there was a Mr. Arnold Rutherford registered. Of course, there was no one by that name.

Then my elbow was seized from behind, and a winded Shillito was there.

"Quick!" he said. "Follow me! I think I know what he's going to do!"

He steered me across the lobby like a protesting drunk being evicted from a genteel party; everyone stared at us as I demanded to know where he had been, and how he could have been so utterly inept. But Shillito wasn't bothered by my complaints; a gleam of triumph lit up his face as we emerged into the daylight, and he spotted Harold himself hurrying out of the alleyway of the hotel, the steel box under his arm.

"I knew it!" Shillito said. "He caught the next elevator down to the service level! We've got to beat him to that cab stand!"

Despite Shillito's bulk, he moved with astonishing speed. He seized Harold around the waist and yanked him away from the yellow cab door, to the further astonishment of the passersby. He said something in his ear, and Harold's complexion went as white as his famous teeth. In the next moment the three of us were in the shelter of the alleyway, and Shillito was adroitly clamping a pair of shiny handcuffs on Harold Buckhalter, who had lost every ounce of his usual ebullience.

"You're under arrest, Buckhalter," Shillito said in deeply satisfied tones. "And about time." Then he fumbled in his jacket pocket and produced a card. He read Harold his rights, and his captive just hung his handsome head and listened. It was right then that I stopped hating Harold.

There was no need to tell Mr. Kipness the entire story when he returned from his trip. The police had been waiting for him on his return, and he had, thank Heavens, gone through the inevitable shrieks and cries when he heard how his firm had been bilked of half a million dollars' worth of gems. I had tried to assure him that the insurance company would take care of the loss, but Mr. Kipness

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had always been tight with a dollar, and light with his insurance coverage.

"How could you be so *stupid*, George?" he asked me in a groaning voice. "How could you let those people *fool* you?"

"Harold fooled *you*," I reminded him. "I didn't hire Harold Buckhalter, Mr. Kipness, you did."

"How should I know he was a crook instead of a salesman?"

"Exactly," I said reasonably. "And how should I have known that Shillito was an accomplice, and not a detective? When he arrested Harold, and kept the diamonds as evidence, I thought it was just normal police routine—"

"Routine? To steal half a million dollars?"

"You heard what the police said, Mr. Kipness. Those two have been using the same scam for years. They're clever, let's face it."

"Yes," he said bitterly. "They're clever, and you're stupid, and that's why *they're* rich and *you're* fired!"

I rose from my chair with dignity.

"Very well, Mr. Kipness."

Before I left the office, I stopped at Gretchen's desk and gave her the Proust edition I had bought earlier that day. She protested that it was much too expensive a gift, but I told her not to be concerned. In fact, if she would have dinner with me that night, I would show her what fine dining could really be like, if one didn't count the cost. She accepted, and I left the office a happy man, thinking about Harold and Mr. Shillito, wishing them Godspeed.

As I said, I no longer hated Harold. In fact, I felt sorry for him. I could imagine what his feelings would be, when he opened the steel box and found nothing but paper clips. The Contessa diamonds, of course, were safe and snug in my little apartment. Did I have any regrets? Why, no. As I told you right from the beginning, I've only hated one man in my life, and that was Mr. Kipness.

"Q"

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a short-short by

W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

In his article titled "The Armchair Criminal" (in "The Armchair Detective," issue of Winter 1981, Volume 14, Number 1), Frank D. McSherry, Jr. describes W. Somerset Maugham's "A Friend in Need" as "an unforgettable story that is one of the two or three finest crime short-shorts ever written" . . .

A FRIEND IN NEED

by W. SOMERSET MAUGHAM

For thirty years now I have been studying my fellow-men. I do not know very much about them. I should certainly hesitate to engage a servant on his face, and yet I suppose it is on the face that for the most part we judge the persons we meet. We draw our conclusions from the shape of the jaw, the look in the eyes, the contour of the mouth. I wonder if we are more often right than wrong. Why novels and plays are so often untrue to life is because their authors, perhaps of necessity, make their characters all of a piece. They cannot afford to make them self-contradictory, for then they become incomprehensible, and yet self-contradictory is what most of us are. We are a haphazard bundle of inconsistent qualities.

In books on logic they will tell you that it is absurd to say that yellow is tubular or gratitude heavier than air; but in that mixture of incongruities that makes up the self, yellow may very well be a horse and cart and gratitude the middle of next week. I shrug when people tell me that their first impressions of a person are always right. I think they must have small insight or great vanity. For my own part I find that the longer I know people the more they puzzle

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me; my oldest friends are just those of whom I can say that I don't know the first thing about them.

These reflections have occurred to me because I read in this morning's paper that Edward Hyde Burton had died at Kobe. He was a merchant and he had been in business in Japan for many years. I knew him very little, but he interested me because once he gave me a great surprise. Unless I had heard the story from his own lips I should never have believed that he was capable of such an action. It was more startling because both in appearance and manner he suggested a very definite type. Here if ever was a man all of a piece. He was a tiny little fellow, not much more than five feet four in height, and very slender, with white hair, a red face much wrinkled, and blue eyes. I suppose he was about sixty when I knew him. He was always neatly and quietly dressed in accordance with his age and station.

Though his offices were in Kobe, Burton often came down to Yokohama. I happened on one occasion to be spending a few days there, waiting for a ship, and I was introduced to him at the British Club. We played bridge together. He played a good game and a generous one. He did not talk very much, either then or later when we were having drinks, but what he said was sensible. He had a quiet, dry humour. He seemed to be popular at the club and afterwards, when he had gone, they described him as one of the best. It happened that we were both staying at the Grand Hotel and next day he asked me to dine with him. I met his wife, fat, elderly, and smiling, and his two daughters. It was evidently a united and affectionate family.

I think the chief thing that struck me about Burton was his kindliness. There was something very pleasing in his mild blue eyes. His voice was gentle; you could not imagine that he could possibly raise it in anger; his smile was benign. Here was a man who attracted you because you felt in him a real love for his fellows. He had charm. But there was nothing mawkish in him; he liked his game of cards and his cocktail, he could tell with point a good and spicy story, and in his youth he had been something of an athlete. He was a rich man and he had made every penny himself. I suppose one thing that made you like him was that he was so small and frail; he aroused your instincts of protection. You felt that he could not bear to hurt a fly.

One afternoon I was sitting in the lounge of the Grand Hotel. This was before the earthquake and they had leather armchairs there. From the windows you had a spacious view of the harbour with its

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crowded traffic. There were great liners on their way to Vancouver and San Francisco or to Europe by way of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Singapore; there were tramps of all nations, battered and sea-worn, junks with their high sterns and great coloured sails, and innumerable sampans. It was a busy, exhilarating scene, and yet, I know not why, restful to the spirit. Here was romance and it seemed that you had but to stretch out your hand to touch it.

Burton came into the lounge presently and caught sight of me. He seated himself in the chair next to mine.

"What do you say to a little drink?"

He clapped his hands for a boy and ordered two gin fizzes. As the boy brought them a man passed along the street outside and seeing me waved his hand.

"Do you know Turner?" said Burton as I nodded a greeting.

"I've met him at the club. I'm told he's a remittance man."

"Yes, I believe he is. We have a good many here."

"He plays bridge well."

"They generally do. There was a fellow here last year, oddly enough a namesake of mine, who was the best bridge player I ever met. I suppose you never came across him in London. Lenny Burton he called himself. I believe he'd belonged to some very good clubs."

"No, I don't believe I remember the name."

"He was quite a remarkable player. He seemed to have an instinct about the cards. It was uncanny. I used to play with him a lot. He was in Kobe for some time."

Burton sipped his gin fizz.

"It's rather a funny story," he said. "He wasn't a bad chap. I liked him. He was always well-dressed and smart-looking. He was handsome in a way with curly hair and pink-and-white cheeks. Women thought a lot of him. There was no harm in him, you know, he was only wild. Of course he drank too much. Those sort of fellows always do. A bit of money used to come in for him once a quarter and he made a bit more by card playing. He won a good deal of mine, I know that."

Burton gave a kindly chuckle. I knew from my own experience that he could lose money at bridge with a good grace. He stroked his shaven chin with his thin hand; the veins stood out on it and it was almost transparent.

"I suppose that is why he came to me when he went broke, that and the fact that he was a namesake of mine. He came to see me in my office one day and asked me for a job. I was rather surprised.

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He told me that there was no more money coming from home and he wanted to work. I asked him how old he was.

" 'Thirty-five,' he said.

" 'And what have you been doing hitherto?' I asked him.

" 'Well, nothing very much,' he said.

"I couldn't help laughing.

" 'I'm afraid I can't do anything for you just yet,' I said. 'Come back and see me in another thirty-five years, and I'll see what I can do.'

"He didn't move. He went rather pale. He hesitated for a moment and then he told me that he had had bad luck at cards for some time. He hadn't been willing to stick to bridge, he'd been playing poker, and he'd got trimmed. He hadn't a penny. He'd pawned everything he had. He couldn't pay his hotel bill and they wouldn't give him any more credit. He was down and out. If he couldn't get something to do he'd have to commit suicide.

"I looked at him for a bit. I could see now that he was all to pieces. He'd been drinking more than usual and he looked fifty. The girls wouldn't have thought so much of him if they'd seen him then.

" 'Well, isn't there anything you can do except play cards?' I asked him.

" 'I can swim,' he said.

" 'Swim!'

"I could hardly believe my ears; it seemed such an insane answer to give.

" 'I swam for my university.'

"I got some glimmering of what he was driving at. I've known too many men who were little tin gods at their university to be impressed by it.

" 'I was a pretty good swimmer myself when I was a young man,' I said.

"Suddenly I had an idea."

Pausing in his story, Burton turned to me.

"Do you know Kobe?" he asked.

"No," I said, "I passed through it once, but I only spent a night there."

"Then you don't know the Shioya Club. When I was a young man I swam from there round the beacon and landed at the creek of Tarumi. It's over three miles and it's rather difficult on account of the currents round the beacon. Well, I told my young namesake about it and I said to him that if he'd do it I'd give him a job.

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"I could see he was rather taken aback.

" 'You say you're a swimmer,' I said.

" 'I'm not in very good condition,' he answered.

"I didn't say anything. I shrugged. He looked at me for a moment and then he nodded.

" 'All right,' he said. 'When do you want me to do it?' "

"I looked at my watch. It was just after ten.

" 'The swim shouldn't take you much over an hour and a quarter. I'll drive round the creek at half-past twelve and meet you. I'll take you back to the club to dress and then we'll have lunch together.'

" 'Done,' he said.

"We shook hands. I wished him good luck and he left me. I had a lot of work to do that morning and I only just managed to get to the creek at Tarumi at half-past twelve. But I needn't have hurried; he never turned up."

"Did he funk it at the last moment?" I asked.

"No, he didn't funk it. He started all right. But of course he'd ruined his constitution by drink and dissipation. The currents round the beacon were more than he could manage. We didn't get the body for about three days."

I didn't say anything for a moment or two. I was a trifle shocked. Then I asked Burton a question.

"When you made him that offer of a job, did you know he'd be drowned?"

He gave a little mild chuckle and he looked at me with those kind and candid blue eyes of his. He rubbed his chin with his hand.

"Well, I hadn't got a vacancy in my office at the moment."

"Q"

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a *NEW* Captain Leopold story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Edward D. Hoch is a specialist in series. His continuity characters include Nick Velvet, the unique thief who steals only the worthless and who must act as a detective to learn why a client is willing to pay a $25,000 fee for something of no value whatever; Dr. Sam Hawthorne, country practitioner whose life in retirement is a recollection of crimes past, crimes so impossible as to baffle and boggle the mind; Sebastian Blue and Laura Charme, Interpol's transportation 'tecs, experts on crimes involving airplanes, ships, and trains; Sir Gideon Parrot, a gentle spoof of the Silver Age (untarnished) and Golden Age (24-carat); Jeffery Rand, the Double-C man, a walking computer programed for codes and ciphers; and Captain Leopold, a procedural policeman whose newest exploit is the investigation of yesterday's murder in Tomorrow City . . .

MURDER AT TOMORROW CITY

by EDWARD D. HOCH

When Tomorrow City opened its doors to the public one glorious Saturday morning in May, Captain Leopold and Lieutenant Fletcher took a ride down to look it over. The twin towers rising at the edge of the downtown area had been a source of local pride and curiosity since construction began two years earlier. Now the office-residential complex was open at last, and the day was a media event of the first magnitude.

"I don't know whether there are more TV cameras or politicians here," Fletcher remarked as they strolled from their car toward the main entrance. "I think it's about even."

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"When something like this succeeds, everyone takes credit for it," Leopold said. "Like Jack Hanley there."

Hanley was a familiar local politician, a city councilman with a handsome face and jet-black hair who'd been active from the start in winning approval for the project. Leopold couldn't really blame him for wanting a share of the limelight now that the work was finished. At the moment he was beaming into a television camera while a woman reporter from Channel Six interviewed him.

They found an old friend, the manager of Tomorrow City, just breaking away from an interview of his own. His name was Sy Belker and he'd been a city policeman about ten years back, before quitting to become a security guard. Now, by the age of forty, he'd gone from guarding apartment complexes to managing one. When he was feeling glum Fletcher liked to speculate how much money he could be earning if he'd followed Belker's route instead of staying with the department.

"How are you, Captain? Fletcher?" Belker asked, shaking their hands. "It's a great day for the city, and especially for downtown development." He smoothed down his windblown brown hair.

"Do we get the tour?" Leopold asked, half in jest.

"You certainly do!" Sy Belker led them through the building's main entrance into a marbled lobby with indirect lighting that recalled for Leopold the art-deco designs of the 1930s.

"Looks more like yesterday than tomorrow," he commented dryly.

"Don't be deceived! Let me show you the elevators." They followed him across the lobby to a bank of stainless-steel doors set almost flush in the wall. "Watch this," he said, and pressed a red button below a microphone hidden behind steel grillework. "Sy Belker." He spoke his name distinctly and one set of elevator doors opened silently.

"That's quite a trick," Leopold admitted.

"It's operated by voice print. When I speak into the microphone a voice print of my words is instantly compared with the voice prints on file in the computer which operates the elevators. If they match, the door opens. If not, it stays shut—the perfect security arrangement."

"Was this your idea, Sy?"

"Mostly. I read about it in an article on the elevators of the future. The technology was already available, so I had it designed in. Management people like myself just say our names. Tenants give their name and apartment numbers. There's a separate bank of elevators

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for the office floors because they have too many visitors to make this system practical."

"What about visitors to the apartments?"

"They announce themselves through the TV intercom over by the door. If they're to be admitted, the tenant overrides the voice print safeguard and opens the elevator doors from his or her own apartment."

"Clever," Fletcher agreed. "The robbery squad shouldn't have much business here."

"This is only the beginning." Belker pressed the button for the fourteenth floor and the elevator silently lifted them. Once there he unlocked the nearest door with a special key. "They can use voice prints instead of keys for the apartment doors too. It's great when their arms are full of groceries."

"You mean they still have to shop?" Leopold asked. "I would have suspected you'd have the groceries flown in and lowered to their windows by helicopter."

"That might be next," Belker answered with a grin. "Look here—this is one of our higher-priced apartments, designed for the executive or professional person who can do much of their work at home. Projection television, computer terminal, electronic word processor, copying machine, microfilm printer. Any or all of these devices may be leased along with the apartment for a full-scale at-home office."

"Where do the poor people live?" Leopold murmured.

"Oh, we have those too—or at least middle-class. We have some very nice small apartments in the five-hundred-dollar a month range. Let me show you one that's already occupied."

They took the elevator down to the eighth floor, where a middle-aged woman with thinning blonde hair opened the door after inspecting them through a peephole. Belker introduced them and said, "This is Cynthia Manners, one of our very first tenants."

"So you brought the police to see me! It's a pleasure, Captain Leopold. And Lieutenant Fletcher. Come in, come in!"

Belker pointed out some of the apartment's features—the built-in wall television, video inspection of downstairs visitors, advanced microwave oven, optional shower massage, and numerous inexpensive gimmicks that contributed an overall sense of modernism if not luxury. "You like it here, don't you, Cynthia?" Belker said.

The woman nodded enthusiastically. "I certainly do, Mr. Belker. Best place I ever lived in! Though I guess anything would seem good

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to me now." When Belker said nothing, she added an explanation for Leopold and Fletcher. "I was away in a hospital for a long time. But I'm all cured now."

A paging signal on Sy Belker's belt suddenly started to beep. "I guess they want me downstairs for more interviews," he said. "But you two stay and look around. I'll see you later."

He quickly departed and Leopold told Cynthia Manners, "We really should be going too. Sy was good enough to show us around—"

"Nonsense! You can stay for a bit. I like to have policemen for my friends. I might need them someday."

"Why would a nice lady like you need a policeman?" Fletcher asked.

She shifted the conversation without seeming to notice. "I got interviewed for the radio today. You know, that nice Tommy Tiger who does the evening call-in show? He interviewed me and some of the other tenants with his tape recorder and he said maybe we'd be on the radio tonight. I'd like that. When all my friends heard me give my name and address they'd know I'd really arrived. Imagine! Me, living in Tomorrow City! A year ago I was in Yesterday's Slums."

"The hospital?" Leopold murmured, edging toward the door but trying to remain polite about it.

"Damn right! They weren't nice to me there—sticking needles in me and all the rest. Ever have shock treatments, Captain? That's why my hair's so thin, you know. They sizzled it with their damn electrodes!"

"We really must be going."

"I hope you'll come again, Captain. There's so much I want to tell you. I've got information about lots of things that happened years ago."

"I'm sure you have." Leopold and Fletcher had reached the door, and with a final goodbye they were out of the apartment. Downstairs, as they left the building, they encountered Sy Belker once more.

"Sorry to leave you like that," he said.

"Is she well enough to be here?" Fletcher asked.

"The doctors say so. As long as she can pay the rent I can't keep her out because she once had a nervous breakdown. Most days she's fine, but she did seem to be rambling a bit just now."

"Where does she work?"

"Nowhere, at the moment. She advertises as a freelance typist but I don't believe she's gotten a great deal of work."

Jack Hanley, the councilman, greeted Leopold with a wide grin.

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"No crime for you here, Captain. Tomorrow City is going to be a model apartment and office complex, fully protected against intrusion. I believe it'll be a showcase for the nation."

"It's attracting a great deal of attention already," Belker confirmed. "We've had a delegation of midwestern mayors here to take a look at it. These days the northeast and midwest need all the help we can get to keep people from moving to the sunbelt."

A great cheer went up from the crowd in front of the complex as the mayor cut a golden ribbon to release hundreds of red, white, and blue balloons into the sky. It was a symbol of the city's rebirth. Tomorrow City was officially open.

It was the following morning at his office that Leopold received the phone call. "This is Cynthia Manners," the woman's voice said. "Remember me?"

"No, I don't—oh, yesterday, at Tomorrow City! Certainly, Miss Manners. How are you today?"

"Not very good. Tommy Tiger didn't use my interview on his radio show."

"That's too bad. Perhaps he'll use it later."

"No, no—I listened to his whole show about Tomorrow City and he didn't use it. I know what I'm going to do now. I just wanted to tell you."

Leopold was growing impatient. "What's that, Miss Manners?"

"I'm going to tell the police who killed that boy on Canal Street. You'll be hearing from me." She hung up before Leopold could respond.

He puzzled over the message for all of three minutes. She'd spoken as if this was something in the recent news, but no boy had been killed lately that Leopold knew about. And he'd never heard of a Canal Street in the city. Just to make sure he checked the street index of the big wall map that hung in the squad room, but there was no Canal Street.

Then Fletcher came in with a suspect in the east-side robberies and the phone call from Cynthia Manners was pushed out of his mind.

He was to remember it on Monday morning when Fletcher got him out of bed to tell him she'd been found murdered in her apartment.

Two days after its official opening, Tomorrow City had its first killing.

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"I feel like the captain of the *Titanic*," Sy Belker was saying, making a grim joke of it. "I tell you this place is crime-proof and we have a murder within forty-eight hours."

Leopold, who'd been called in to work on his day off, stared grimly at the body on the rug. He was remembering Cynthia Manners on the telephone, and wondering what he might have done to save her life.

"Shot once in the left temple with a small-caliber bullet," Fletcher confirmed, kneeling by the body as the photographers and fingerprint men went about their business. The medical examiner hadn't yet arrived, but there was no doubt she was dead.

"Did anyone hear the shot?" Leopold asked Belker. "It probably wouldn't have been too loud."

The manager shook his head. "This is the only occupied apartment on the floor. Three others are rented, but the people haven't moved in yet."

Leopold remembered the security setup. "Then the killer didn't come from another apartment. With your trick elevators Cynthia must have pressed the button herself to let him come up. That means she knew him."

"I can check on that easily enough. The computer keeps a record whenever a tenant overrides the voice-print safeguard."

While he went off to do that Fletcher remarked, "He doesn't seem too concerned about this, considering the bad publicity it'll give the whole complex."

Leopold merely grunted. There was something about the case he didn't like, and he knew a large part of it was her Sunday-morning phone call. Had a boy been killed on Canal Street, and if so, how did that involve Cynthia Manners? The arrival of the medical examiner brought him back to the present once more. "Any chance she could have killed herself, Doc?" he asked.

Dr. Benjamin Quinn rubbed the bald spot on his head. "Did you find a gun?"

"No."

"And there are no powder burns. Though the angle is consistent with suicide by a left-handed person, I'd rule it out. It wasn't a contact wound and there's no weapon. You've got yourself a homicide, Captain."

The verdict didn't surprise anyone. Leopold glanced around the apartment, trying to find something out of place since his prior visit.

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But it all looked the same to him—the sterile trappings of Cynthia Manners's fragile life. In the bedroom he found a carton of books that hadn't yet been unpacked, and because people's reading habits interested him he glanced through the titles. They were all best-sellers, mainly fiction in book-club editions, from a period some twenty years earlier: *Hawaii, Advise and Consent, The Agony and the Ecstasy, Ship of Fools, The Spy Who Came in from the Cold, The Group, The Shoes of the Fisherman.*

"Captain," Fletcher called to him from the other room.

"What have you got?"

"The press has gotten wind of this. There are a half-dozen reporters downstairs. You want to make a statement?"

"Not if I can help it, but I suppose it goes with the job."

He took the elevator down to the building's sterile, art-deco lobby and faced the gathered press. "A woman was murdered here in her apartment sometime during the night," he announced, glancing over their faces. "She's been identified as Cynthia Manners. No motive is known for the crime."

"Captain, how did the killer gain access to her apartment?"

"How was she killed? Was she raped?"

He held up his hands. "That's all I've got for you now. We'll issue a further statement later at headquarters."

The reporters grumbled and tried again, but Leopold held firm. When the elevator doors opened and the morgue attendants wheeled out the body there was a brief diversion and he took advantage of it to motion one of the reporters aside. "You're Tommy Tiger, aren't you?" he asked a slim sandy-haired man with a boyish face.

"That's me, Captain. How's chances for an exclusive interview?"

"I think it could be arranged. Just step this way." He caught the elevator door before it slid shut and ushered Tommy Tiger inside.

"Do you have any sus—?"

Leopold cut him short. "I think you misunderstood me, Tommy. I'm the one that's going to be interviewing you."

"Huh?" Up close, under the harsh fluorescent glow of the elevator lights, Tommy Tiger looked older. The boyish face was crinkled and lined, suggesting a man in his forties. He carried a tape recorder on a strap over one shoulder, and was holding a microphone in one hand. As Leopold spoke he hit the OFF button on the recorder. "What is this? You said—"

"I said we could arrange an exclusive interview." The elevator stopped at the eighth floor and they got out at the open door of the

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dead woman's apartment. "Cynthia Manners said you interviewed her on Saturday."

"Maybe I did. I talked to a lot of people in the crowd."

"Did you come up here?"

"No. There were some tenants around before the ceremonies and I spoke with them then."

"She thought she'd be on the radio, but she wasn't. She phoned me yesterday to tell me that."

"I recorded about two hours of stuff. I had to edit it down to a half hour, with commercials. I couldn't use everything."

"Do you have those out-takes?"

"Sure. Want to listen to them back at the studio?"

"It might be a good idea. Do you remember her saying anything to you about a boy being killed, over on Canal Street?"

"Where's Canal Street?"

"That's what I don't know," Leopold admitted with a sigh. "Let's go back to your studio and find that tape."

The radio station which employed Tommy Tiger in its news and public-affairs department was something of a relic from the past. Located in an aging office building within sight of Tomorrow City, it harked back to those days of forty years ago when radio was king. The studio was large, able to accommodate a small orchestra and a few rows of spectators. Now, with a disk jockey and several metal shelves of jazz and rock records crowded into one corner, the room seemed oddly disproportionate.

Tommy Tiger waved to the announcer on duty as they passed through the room and went into the glassed-in cubicle that was his office. He rummaged through a pile of tapes and finally selected one. "I think she's on here," he said, and slipped the cassette into a tape player. He turned down the volume so the sound wouldn't carry into the studio.

They listened to bits of two or three interviews before Tommy found the one he wanted. Then Leopold heard Cynthia Manners once more, as she'd sounded on Saturday at her apartment and Sunday on the telephone. He heard her give her name and apartment number, and then launch into a rambling memoir of the city as it was twenty years before.

"She's got quite a memory," Leopold commented.

Tommy grunted. "The manager told me she'd been in the hospital off and on. Nervous breakdown or whatever. Shock treatments will

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do that sometimes—bring back vivid memories of the past. But you can see why I didn't use any of this stuff. She just rambled on and on."

The tape hit a blank stretch and Tommy switched it off. "Thanks for playing it," Leopold said. "She phoned me yesterday and seemed upset that you hadn't used it. Said something about telling who killed a boy on Canal Street."

"Like I said, where is it? There's no Canal Street in this city, and she didn't mention it on the tape."

"But she was remembering the past," Leopold mused. "How it was here twenty years ago. That would have been just before my time. How about you?"

Tommy Tiger laughed. "I was working for a little farm station in Nebraska twenty years ago. My first job out of college. I hate to think about it now."

"Is Tiger your real name?"

"Hell, no! The station picked it. When I leave they'll get a new Tommy Tiger. That's the way small time radio works."

Leopold glanced through the glass partition. "Judging by that studio this was big-time radio once."

"That was yesterday," Tommy Tiger said.

Leopold left him and drove back to headquarters. Councilman Jack Hanley was waiting to see him, his jet-black hair uncharacteristically rumpled. "Captain, I've just heard about the killing at Tomorrow City. What can we do about it?"

"Bury the dead and find the killer."

"I mean the publicity. No chance she shot herself?"

"None."

"Are there any leads?"

"Maybe. Did this city ever have a Canal Street, around twenty years ago?"

Hanley thought for a moment and then said, "Sure! It got swallowed up when they built the eastern expressway in the early '60s."

"That might help," Leopold said, rising and taking his hat.

"Where are you going now?" the councilman asked. "I came here to demand action!"

"That's what you're getting. I can't work on the case while I'm talking to you." He left the man standing open-mouthed in the center of his office and went off to find Sergeant Connie Trent.

Connie was working in the file room when he found her, moving folders from one drawer to another. Sometimes he thought of her as

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a compulsive housekeeper, but right now he was glad to find her here. "Isn't this your day off, Captain?"

"Supposed to be, Connie. Fletcher called me in on this Tomorrow City killing."

"I'll bet that's got the city fathers nervous."

"A bit. Look, there's an angle I want to check out. Which files are those?"

"This drawer is 1970."

"I need to go back further than that, to the early '60s."

"That stuff's all in the basement."

"Think you could dig it out for me?"

"I can try. You know, if we had everything on a computer—"

"Some day, Connie, when the city has lots of extra money they don't know what to do with."

"What do you need, Captain?"

"A boy was killed on Canal Street about twenty years ago. That's where the expressway is now. See what you can find for me."

"Traffic accident or homicide?"

"I don't know. I guess you'll have to check both."

He went back upstairs and found Fletcher waiting for him. "Sy Belker just phoned, Captain. He checked the computer override on the elevators at Tomorrow City."

"What did he find?"

"Nothing. No one admitted any guests last night or this morning. Belker says it means she must have gone out and returned with the person who killed her."

"I suppose that's possible," Leopold admitted. But he was thinking of another possibility. "The dead woman was under psychiatric care—apparently had shock treatments at one time. I need to know her entire history. She must have relatives somewhere."

"I'm one jump ahead of you. We located a sister here in town. She's waiting outside now."

"Bring her in."

Agatha Crowley was a stocky woman in her early fifties, who wore tinted glasses and hair to match. She did not seem overly despondent about her sister's death. "My husband says she's better off dead, and I suppose he's right. She'd been in and out of mental hospitals for twenty years."

"What was the cause of her trouble, Mrs. Crowley?"

"She was in her early twenties, just married and pregnant. Her husband left her. She gave the baby up for adoption and that was

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the beginning of her troubles. Suddenly she was without a husband or a child. She'd quit her job, and didn't have many friends. Then both our parents died within a few months of each other. It was just too much. She had a breakdown and tried to kill herself. After that it was just in and out of mental hospitals. We packed up her things and she never had a place of her own again, until now. When she'd come out of the hospital for a little while she'd stay with us, but never for very long."

"Did she have shock treatments?"

Agatha Crowley nodded. "They tried everything on her. Recently, with the growing move to get people out of the mental hospitals, she was living at a sort of halfway house. Then the doctor decided she was well enough to be on her own."

"How was she able to afford that apartment at Tomorrow City?"

"I can't imagine. I asked her just after she moved in a couple of weeks ago and she said she was getting the money from an old friend. She said it like it was a man and he was keeping her, but I'm sure that wasn't the case."

"Stranger things have happened," Leopold said. "When did your sister have her first breakdown?"

"It was just before Christmas of 1962. She was twenty-three years old—nearly ten years younger than me. Christmas is always a bad time for people with mental problems."

"Was Manners her married name?"

"No, her married name was Gunther."

"I don't suppose you remember the name of the doctor who first treated her."

"Why would you want that?"

"I have a feeling the motive for her murder might lie in the past, Mrs. Crowley—in something that happened twenty years ago but was recently remembered because of the shock treatments she had. I think we need to dig into that past, and if I could locate her doctor it might help."

"Well, you can find him easy enough. He works for the city now."

"What?"

"He's your medical examiner, Dr. Quinn."

Dr. Benjamin Quinn maintained a small private practice in addition to his duties with the city, and Leopold visited him at his new office in the professional wing of Tomorrow City. "How do you like it, Captain?" the medical examiner asked, showing him through the

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sparkling rooms with their mysterious diagnostic gadgets jutting from the walls. "It cost me a pretty penny, but I believe it's the most modern physician's office in the state." He pulled the flexible arm of one chrome device out for Leopold's inspection. "Blood pressure and heartbeat can be checked on this and the results fed directly to the patient's computerized records."

Leopold smiled. "With a place like this you'll probably be devoting more time to private practice."

"Oh, no—you're not losing me yet. But being medical examiner here isn't quite the full-time job it is in New York or Los Angeles. And twenty-three thousand a year isn't enough pay to lure me out of private practice entirely. I have to keep my hand in. Actually, I'll have two young doctors in here with me. They'll be carrying most of the case load."

"I wanted to ask you about one of your former patients, Ben. That woman who was killed last night—Cynthia Manners."

"Funny thing—you know I didn't even recognize her. The name sounded vaguely familiar, but it must have been close to twenty years since I treated her. Who told you I was her physician?"

"Her sister remembered your name. Do you remember anything about her back then? She would have been Cynthia Gunther."

"Very little. And my records are on a moving van at this moment. She had mental problems as I remember it. Husband left her when she was pregnant, and then her parents died. Tried to commit suicide. I wasn't a psychiatrist, you understand, but after the suicide attempt I got her into Memorial Hospital. After that I sort of lost touch, but I think part of her problem was an affair with another man."

"Do you remember her sister?"

"Not really, though I suppose I met her after the suicide attempt."

Leopold sat down on one of the contoured waiting-room chairs. "What I really want is information about her past, Ben. What do you know about this husband who ran off?"

"Nothing that I can remember. But I'll be glad to check my records when they're unpacked."

"Thanks, Ben. This is a nice place you've got here. Comfortable chairs."

"I have to give them something for their money."

Leopold went down to the lobby and walked through to the residential side of the vast complex. He stared for a time at the closed elevator doors, then pushed the button and said his name into the

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speaker. Nothing happened. He tried again with Cynthia Manners' name, and then with Sy Belker's name, but still the elevator doors remained firmly shut. As he left the building another moving van was pulling up. If news of the murder had got around, it hadn't deterred any prospective tenants.

Back at headquarters Connie was waiting to present him with a faded, dust-streaked folder. "This may be what you're looking for, Captain. A nine-year-old boy was killed by a hit-and-run driver on Canal Street in 1962."

"Did they find the driver?"

"They found the car, but the owner claimed it had been stolen. He called the police to report the theft just ten minutes after the accident. The grand jury heard the case, but there wasn't enough evidence for an indictment. When the car was recovered there were signs it had been broken into—though the owner could have faked them, of course."

"What was the owner's name?"

She flipped through the folder. "I've got it here someplace. Let's see, twenty-four years old, married—ah, here it is, name of George Gunther."

"Gunther."

"Does it mean anything to you?"

"I think so, Connie. Does his wife's name appear anywhere in the records?"

"She was questioned by police, but she couldn't provide an alibi for him. Her name was Cynthia Gunther."

Leopold nodded. "Maiden name Cynthia Manners. That's our murder victim, Connie. Is there a mug shot of Gunther in the file?"

She shook her head. "He was never booked. When the grand jury failed to indict, the case was dropped."

Leopold chewed at his lower lip. "We need to find him. She said on the phone yesterday she'd tell the police who killed the boy on Canal Street. That implies she knew where her ex-husband was. She may have threatened him and gotten herself killed for it."

"You think he's living here under another identity?"

"That's what I've got to find out. And the place to look is the dead woman's apartment."

It was Leopold's third trip to Tomorrow City that day, and there were still moving vans in evidence. Sy Belker was directing movers to the freight elevators and he took Leopold up to the eighth floor

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himself. "The killer might have come up this way," Leopold suggested, "in the freight elevator."

Belker shook his head. "No, the downstairs door was locked and I have the only key. You're resisting the obvious, Captain. I think she went out last night and picked someone up in a bar. She brought him back here and he killed her."

"The computer doesn't keep tabs on tenants who use the elevator?"

"No, we didn't see any need of that. Just when they admit outsiders."

Belker left him at the scene of the crime and Leopold entered the apartment alone. He went immediately to the bedroom and searched quickly through the drawers. Then he concentrated on the boxes waiting to be unpacked. He was searching for a diary, letters, photographs, anything that might help identify the husband who'd deserted her those many years ago.

It was not until he reached the box of books that his search was rewarded. Stuck inside the copy of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was the beginning of a letter to the dead woman's sister. It was dated July 15, 1962—two days after the hit-and-run accident on Canal Street—and it began, *Dearest Agatha, Something terrible has happened. George killed a boy with his car and then reported the car had been stolen. I don't know what's going to happen*

The letter stopped suddenly in mid-sentence and had never been resumed. Leopold imagined her stuffing it quickly inside the book as her husband returned home from somewhere.

There was the motive. Now all he had to do was find George Gunther.

He telephoned Agatha Crowley from the apartment, catching her as she was leaving home for the funeral parlor. "Just one or two more questions, Mrs. Crowley."

"I don't have much time. My husband's outside in the car."

"Did Cynthia ever write you or tell you that her husband George killed a boy with his car?"

"What? No, she never said that. Is it true?"

"It seems to be. I found a letter she started to write you back in 1962. One more question. Do you know what happened to George Gunther? Is there any chance he's still around town?"

"That's a funny thing. About two years ago a friend of mine thought she saw him on the street. I looked him up in the phone book but he wasn't listed. I don't know if I'd even recognize him

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after twenty years. They were only married a short time, and I never saw much of him."

Leopold thanked her and hung up. He was about to leave the apartment when he heard the elevator stop at that floor. He stepped back against the wall and waited behind the closed door, knowing none of the other apartments on the floor was occupied.

Then he heard a voice in the hall say, quite distinctly, "Cynthia Manners." It was the voice of the dead woman, speaking her name.

The knob turned and the door opened slowly. Leopold could feel the hair standing on the back of his neck. He didn't believe in ghosts, but he felt he was about to meet one. He drew his revolver.

Then he saw the hand holding the small black object and sighed. Not a ghost after all—only a tape recorder.

"Come in, Mr. Gunther," he said quietly. "Or would you prefer being called Tommy Tiger?"

The sandy-haired radio announcer turned to face him. "This was a nice sort of trap, wasn't it?"

"No trap, Tommy. Your luck just ran out. You came here for the letter, of course, but I already have it." He held up the piece of paper he'd found in the book.

"I—"

"You recorded Cynthia's name and apartment number when you interviewed her, of course. You made a copy of the necessary words on that little tape recorder and used it to get by the elevator's voice-print safeguards. You simply played the recording of her voice giving her name and apartment number and the elevator opened up. You came here last night and killed her, and you came back just now for this letter."

"I didn't kill her."

"Do you deny that you're George Gunther, her former husband?"

He took a deep breath. "I think I want a lawyer. You haven't any evidence against me."

"Don't worry, you'll have a lawyer."

"I'll admit I used a tape of Cynthia's voice to enter her apartment just now, but that doesn't mean I killed her. Anyone could have taped her name off the interview on my program."

But Leopold shook his head. "You didn't use the interview—remember? I think you ran into Cynthia quite by accident at the opening ceremonies on Saturday. You taped her along with several others, and for some reason it became very important

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to her. When you didn't use the tape she phoned me yesterday and said she'd tell the police who killed a boy on Canal Street—a boy involved in a twenty-year-old hit-and-run accident. In her mind it was as fresh as if it happened yesterday. She phoned you too with the threat, and you came up here last night and killed her."

"You heard the interview I taped. She said nothing on there about being married to me."

"Not on the part I heard. But I remember now there was a period of silence at the end, as if something had been erased."

"All right," Tiger admitted with a sigh. "I was married to her once. I left her when she got pregnant. God, she was already a bit crazy then. I couldn't face spending the rest of my life with her."

"Tell me about the accident on Canal Street."

"My car was stolen. That's the truth."

Leopold nodded. "You'd better call your lawyer. I'm taking you in for questioning."

At that point Leopold had convinced himself the case was solved. Tommy Tiger, or George Gunther, would hold out for a few hours but in the end he'd sign a confession. They usually did.

But as the night wore on, Leopold became less sure of himself. Seated across the table from Gunther in the interrogation room he could almost feel the case slipping through his fingers. It was a little before ten and he was beginning to run down after the long day. "Let's take it from the top once more, George. If you didn't kill her why did you break into her apartment this afternoon?"

"I didn't break in. There was no forcible entry."

"That tape recorder had the same effect as a lock pick, George. In the eyes of the law you broke in. Why?"

"I had an anonymous phone call telling me there was evidence in the apartment linking me with her death."

"Well, this is a new story, at least! Why didn't you come up with this one four hours ago?"

"It sounded far-fetched. I didn't think you'd believe me."

"You're right!"

Gunther's lawyer was showing increasing signs of exasperation. "Look here, Captain. I think it's time we put an end to this foolishness. You haven't a sliver of evidence against my client."

"No? I can book him right now for breaking and entering."

"Then you'd better do it, or else release him."

Leopold left the room and turned the questioning over to Fletcher. Something was wrong and he knew it. The pieces weren't fitting

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together properly. Gunther wasn't about to break down, and the hard evidence against him was practically nonexistent.

Leopold went back to his office to brood.

The book was there on his desk, the spy novel that had contained the start of the letter to Cynthia's sister. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* by John le Carré. Leopold flipped through the pages near the front.

And then he knew.

It all made sense in a crazy sort of way. It had been yesterday's case from the beginning, even though it all took place in Tomorrow City.

He went back into the interrogation room and sat down. Fletcher paused in his questioning and Leopold asked, "George, why did you desert your wife twenty years ago when you found out she was pregnant?"

"I don't know. I couldn't live with her any longer."

"Was it because you weren't certain the baby was yours?"

"I—I'd rather not get into that."

"But she was having an affair with another man?"

"I think so, yes. I could never prove it."

"Did you know who?"

He shook his head. "No. She was—unstable. She wasn't responsible for what she did."

"And the day this boy was killed with your car. What about that?"

"I told you it was stolen. I reported it to the police."

"Any idea who stole it?"

"It was in front of our apartment and she was home, supposedly alone. I always suspected her boy friend took it, maybe to go get a six-pack or something."

"But you didn't know who he was?"

"I had no idea. And after the divorce I stopped caring."

Leopold motioned Fletcher to follow him into the hall. "What do you think, Captain?"

"He's innocent. If he'd killed her he'd have searched for that letter the first time. I'm not a believer that the murderer returns to the scene of the crime. And if he's innocent he's probably telling the truth about that anonymous phone call."

"So what do we do now?"

"We release him. We can always hit him with the breaking-and-entering charge later if we have to. Meanwhile, I want you to do a background check on someone else."

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"Who?"

"The murderer, unless I've guessed wrong a second time."

Leopold caught a few hours of sleep on a cot at headquarters, and had breakfast at the temperamental coffee machine outside his office. By nine o'clock he was back in Tomorrow City, entering Sy Belker's office.

"How's it going, Captain?" Belker asked. "Anything new on the Manners killing?"

"I think we'll wrap it up today."

"No fooling?"

"No fooling, Sy. You killed her."

"Me? You've got to be kidding."

"I wish I was." He placed the book and the unfinished letter on Belker's desk. "This letter is a clever forgery. It was supposedly written by the dead woman twenty years ago, but our lab analysis shows this grade of paper wasn't manufactured that far back. The letter was planted among Cynthia's unpacked books to serve a dual purpose. If the police found it, suspicion would be directed at her former husband. And if it was overlooked you could use it as bait to lure that former husband—George Gunther, known locally as Tommy Tiger—to her apartment while I was there.

"It might have worked, Sy, except for one glaring error. She was supposed to have been interrupted while writing this letter twenty years ago, and slipped it inside the book. It was then packed away with her other books and remained there untouched during her various hospitalizations. You must have brought the forged letter to her apartment after you killed her, carrying it in a book of your own so it wouldn't have to be folded in your pocket. But you chose the wrong title, Sy. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* wasn't published here till 1964. Even the British edition didn't appear till 1963—a full year after the date of the letter. By that time Cynthia Manners was already hospitalized. Her suicide attempt was just before Christmas of 1962."

"What does all this have to do with me?"

"If the letter was a fake and this book was added to her collection later, it had to be by someone who knew she had books from that period. Someone who'd known her, or who'd been in her apartment after she moved in. You seemed to qualify, and you qualified on two other counts as well. The elevators and doors presented no barrier to you—I saw the elevator respond to your voice and name. Also

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there was the problem of how Cynthia Manners could afford to live here in the first place. If she was someone from your past, perhaps blackmailing you for fathering her child, you might be willing to pay for her apartment, and even get her settled before the place officially opened."

"Why would I kill her if I was paying her rent?"

"Because Cynthia Manners was still living in the past, remembering how you borrowed her husband's car and killed a boy on Canal Street. In some twisted way she wanted fame, or recognition at least. When her former husband didn't air an interview he had with her, she decided to get recognition another way—by telling the police about that hit-and-run accident. She warned you in advance and you decided you couldn't put up with her threats any longer. You killed her and planted that book and letter. I imagine there'd have been further planted evidence along the way too, all pointing toward her former husband. She must have told you she'd phoned me about the boy being killed, so you had to tie it in with that somehow. You had the advantage over Gunther. You knew who he was, but he didn't know who you were."

"You call all this evidence?"

Leopold sighed. He'd been hoping for a confession. "We've had people checking your background all night, Sy. Dr. Quinn will testify that Cynthia told him of an affair. You lived here all your life, and I think we can link you with her. I think we can even prove you paid her first month's rent in Tomorrow City."

"Are you arresting me?"

"I'm taking you in for questioning, Sy."

Leopold let him get his coat and they started out together. At the elevator the building manager paused and spoke his name. "Sy Belker." The gleaming doors slid silently open.

Then he half turned, shoved Leopold aside, and dove into the elevator. The doors had closed again before Leopold's gun was out.

It took a half hour for them to bypass the computer and reopen the elevator doors. But Sy Belker hadn't gone anywhere. He'd shot himself in the head with the same gun he used to kill Cynthia Manners.

Some months later Leopold read in the paper that the elevators at Tomorrow City had developed bugs. The expensive computer-controlled voice-print system was being replaced by conventional buttons.

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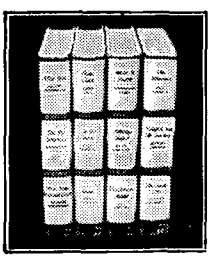

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